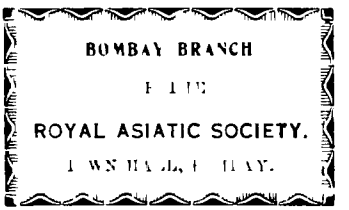
00024272



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

158

A

CHRONICLE OF THE FERMORS:

HORACE WALPOLE IN LOVE.

By M. F. MAHONY,
(MATTHEW STRADLING,)
AUTHOR OF "THE MISADVENTURES OF MR. CATLYNE," "CHEAP JOHN'S AUCTION," "THE IRISH BAR SINISTER," ETC.

24272
a c

"Ours is the banquet-song's light-hearted strain,
Roses our only laurel;
The progress of a love suit our campaign,
Our only scars the gashes that remain
When romping lovers quarrel."
HORACE, Ode vi. (*Father Prout*).

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

yy j 42

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, LOW, AND SEARLE,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.
1873.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

24272

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

A Great and Good Man 1

CHAPTER II.

An Opportunity Deferred 28

CHAPTER III.

Vincit Amor 50

CHAPTER IV.

In which Lincoln writes two Letters . . . 82

CHAPTER V.

A Restless Interval 106

CHAPTER VI.

Carteret 138

CHAPTER VII.

The Bridegroom takes Precautions 157

CHAPTER VIII.

A Personal Triumph 184

PAGE

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRD IN THE BUSH ONCE MORE 196

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH LORD LINCOLN IS AGAIN VERY BRAVE . . 217

CHAPTER XI.

AND LORD CARTERET IS MADE VERY HAPPY . . 231

CHAPTER XII.

LA REINE EST MORTE—VIVE LA REINE! . . . 241

CHAPTER XIII.

A VICTORIOUS DESCENT 254

CHAPTER XIV.

CARTERET HOUSE 263

CHAPTER XV.

THE CURTAIN FALLS 282

CHAPTER XVI.

A MATRIMONIAL CONCLUSION 294

A Chronicle of the Fermors.

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT AND GOOD MAN.

For thirty years the Duke of Newcastle held a leading position in the government of England, and for ten years actually occupied the first seat on the Treasury Bench. He was the centre and pivot of a great political party. He held levees like royalty at his town mansion. Macaulay tells us that, "Mean and selfish politicians pining for commissionerships, gold sticks, and ribands, flocked to the great house at the corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields:" it must have been like the smaller fry who resort to Dublin Castle in our day.

Yet the Duke was mean and unprincipled as a man, and as a statesman deceitful and corrupt

beyond belief. "He was false beyond all example of political falsehood," says Macaulay again. He betrayed everybody in every relation in life—the king, the prince, his colleagues in office, his adversaries in Parliament, and his partizans there also. Treachery was the atmosphere in which he moved, and the aim of it, advancement of himself.

We may be dazzled by the successful march through life of some audacious character; one who openly sets the guiding maxims of this world at defiance, and mocks at the idea of retribution in the other; whose triumph to our shortsighted vision appears to be because of the very defiance of his attitude: for there is an evil fascination in mere audacity; something which overcomes us in the career of a bold bad man who beats out his winning course, not by the blessing of providence, or the might of truth, or the strength of justice, but boastingly without these aids; by strength of arm only, of human arm—of that strongest battalion which Napoleon declared had always the visible

protection of heaven. There is a pride of race in us which glows at the sight of mere courage and successful human enterprise; even the sympathies of a feeble Christianity follow the reckless lives of bold men of mark admiringly, rendering homage "to bad eminence," but always on one condition, that the individual shall be distinguished by badness and not by vulgarity; that his transgressions be against the moral law, and never against that of good taste. To be cruel, false, avaricious, vicious, these are not inconsistent with the attributes of an idol; but if the idol provokes derision every time the votary knees down, how is it possible to continue worshipping with any decency of form? Yet treacherous and unscrupulous as any vicious example in history, Newcastle nevertheless enjoyed extreme popularity, although none of the lurid interest of daring badness hangs about his character; he was deficient in the great natural qualities of foremost men; as wanting in capacity, judgment, personal courage, personal dignity, as in morals and honesty. Pompous and

frivolous, vain of his person as any woman, always on the strain to make a figure in the world, yet with all his efforts never attaining to anything beyond a caricature, he excited nothing but aversion, ridicule and contempt. He was nothing unless a buffoon, and on every notable occasion he was that. At every public ceremonial of which we have any record he misconducted himself monstrously; never was a man of his official station so wanting in direct perception, in common decency of behaviour, in ordinary sense and reason. His gait was a hurried and awkward shuffle, his utterance a stutter. By turns coward, hypocrite and tyrant, he dictates terms to his colleagues in office, yet descends from his hectoring position, cringes, denies, eats his words, and submits on the first show of opposition. He snuffles and cants with a bishop, aye, with *the* Bishop—the same clever cleric who tipped, or who made that sporting bet about the bishopric with Lady Yarmouth, and lost it, and payed down his £5000 like a honest prelate. In domestic privacy the

Duke's conversation was garnished with oaths and curses. But in public he was always kissing or crying, literally on the verge of hysterics, vowing extravagant sentiments alternately of friendship, grief, affection; and the greater the occasion the more eagerly he availed himself of the opportunity for display.

At the funeral of the king he was so overcome that he burst into floods of tears, and rushed many times down into the vault, tearing himself away from a last look at the remains of the sainted monarch whose spirit was already (according to the poet-bishop, good Dr. Porteus, quoted by Thackeray) in heaven:

> "No further blessing could on earth be given—
> The next degree of happiness was—heaven!"

There were a crowd of persons standing by, witnesses of the heartrending scene, amongst these Horace Walpole. Who has not looked at the picture of that comedy exhibited by him? The burlesque Duke falling into a fit of tears at the moment of entering the chapel, then, in a spasm of grief, he

flings himself into a stall sobbing aloud, the Archbishop hovering over him with a smelling-bottle, all the circle of tearful eyes looking on at the exhibition. "Then in two minutes," adds Walpole, "his curiosity got the better of his hypocrisy, and he ran about the chapel with his glass to spy who was or was not there, spying with one hand and mopping his eyes with the other. Then returned the fear of catching cold, and the Duke of Cumberland, who was sinking with heat, felt himself weighed down, and turning round found it was the Duke of Newcastle standing upon his train to avoid the chill of the marble."

On another occasion he rushes half-dressed and covered with shaving suds to embrace a great ambassador. On another he pushes by force into the Duke of Grafton's sick room, and in gushes of tears begins to embrace his sores and plasters.

Buss! buss! "Get away—hold him off. How can you be such a beast as to kiss such a wretch as I am?" exclaims the dying nobleman.

Though ridiculously vain of his absurd person, and as proud as a satrap, Newcastle seemed to be supremely indifferent to the ridicule of the world. He was lampooned in innumerable squibs and pamphlets, and nicknamed by all the wits; but he did not mind. Satire had no more power to reach him than if he had been an Irish Chief Secretary in modern times. "His Grace of Newcastle, who has gone under every nickname, waits, I believe, to see to which he will cling," writes Walpole. "He is the arbiter of England—both the political parties are trying to unite with him. The King pulls him. The next reign (for you know his grace is very young) pulls him back. Present power tempts. Mr. Fox's popularity terrifies. He will reconcile all by immediate duty to the King, with a salvo to the intention of betraying him to the Prince, to make his peace with the latter as soon as he has made up with the former."

Withal his capacity for deceit rose almost to genius, and he employed this one talent with a success which no man of genius has ever surpassed;

he was the most dangerous knave alive, because he appeared to be such a fool that people were off their guard, and in every thing, except in the practice of duplicity, he was the fool he looked. Lord Macaulay says of him, "All the able men of his time ridiculed him as a dunce, a driveller, a child who never knew his own mind for an hour, and he yet overreached them all round." Armed only with his cunning, he carried away prizes for which a crowd of able competitors were ineffectually striving. His success in securing state emoluments equalled his capacity for intrigue, and that was inconceivably great. He first tried to treat with either Pitt or Fox; but finding him too slippery and false, they each broke from him in turn; then he tried to bully them both. Too jealous of power to delegate any portion of it, he sought, while ruling himself in the Lords, to rule vicariously in the Commons through his creature Sir Thomas Robinson, the same who had such a love for dancing and fiddling, and whose capacity did not extend beyond the level of

such pastimes. Sir Thomas was content with the position of an understrapper; it was better than having none at all; but when Pitt and Fox joined hands in attack, there was speedily an end of Sir Thomas. The Duke was scared at the excitement raised by the eloquence of Pitt, and his creature was promptly pensioned off on the Irish establishment, then, as now, the refuge of incompetent or inconvenient political instruments—leaving Fox to become secretary of state and leader in the House. Failing thus in open warfare, the Duke undertook these famous rivals separately, and brought Pitt into the Cabinet for the obvious purpose of overbalancing Fox. Ultimately he silenced Fox, and kissed, petted, patronized, and made a tool of Pitt. He took Mr. Pitt in one hand and Mr. Fox in the other like a pair of drum-sticks, and thwacked away with one hand or other to what time and tune he would. These men of genius were but puppets in the hands of this buffoon. Finally he coalesced with Pitt in order to obtain a permanent tenure of power, and also

because of two temptations, always irresistible with him—an opportunity of breaking his promises and of performing an act of perfidy towards the King, who had petted and pampered and loaded him with benefits for nearly thirty years. He cleverly arranged that Pitt's brains and reputation should subserve to his personal profit and ambition. By covering his own ragged character with Pitt's blazing robe he became a sort of sleeping partner in the tribute of public adoration paid to the heaven-born minister.

He practised this art of climbing on the shoulders of taller figures on all the clever men who ever came in contact with him. He pilfered their brains or their virtue, and often defamed them afterwards to prevent the theft from being discovered.

But great as was his cunning, his ignorance surpassed it. He spoke of Hanover as being in the North; Walpole says he thought it was in Scotland. At a time when we were fighting about Cape Breton, when Lord Anson had actually

defeated a French fleet equipped for its recovery, the Duke was amazed at discovering it was an island, and ran to communicate the discovery to his Majesty.

"Cape Breton an island! Wonderful! Show it to me in the map. So it is, sure enough. My dear sir, you always bring us good news."

He was enormously rich. Prime minister for ten years, yet his meanness in money matters exceeds belief. He would cheat a chairman of a sixpence or a lackey of his wages. If he had been a finance minister in our days we would have applauded his ability. He was niggardly enough to have made a modern reputation in the Exchequer. He would overreach in the smallest dealing, and was as clever in these dealings, and in all kindred pettifogging arts, as a sessions attorney. His shrewdness in getting places was only surpassed by his greediness for them, and he eventually counted up a list of political appointments that few statesmen have rivalled. Although without business capacity or talent for organization, with a

scatter-brain that could not contain two things together, and a capacity for blundering whenever a mistake was practicable, he climbed up to the first position in England and maintained himself therein for thirty years. Here is a list of his acquisitions and achievements.

After obtaining many minor honours, on 26th October, 1714, he was advanced to the dignity of Earl, then Marquis of Clare, in the county of Suffolk, and Viscount Haughton in the county of Nottingham, with remainder to the heirs male of his brother Henry Pelham. On the 28th October he was appointed Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the County of Nottingham. On the 10th November following, Custos Rotulorum of Middlesex, and Lord Lieutenant of the said county and city of Westminster on the 28th December following. The same year Steward, Warden, and Keeper of the forest of Sherwood and park of Folwood, in the county of Nottingham. On the 2nd August, 1715, he was created Marquis and Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, Chamberlain of his Majesty's

Household on the 13th April following, and, on 16th April, member of the Privy Council. The next year saw him installed a Knight Companion of the Garter, a Royal Commissioner, Lord Justice, Ambassador, one of the Chief Secretaries of State, and, finally, after his marriage with the Lady Harriet (daughter of Francis Earl of Godolphin, by the daughter and coheiress of John Duke of Marlborough), First Lord of the Treasury, which office he held twelve years. In July 1737 he was chosen High Steward of Cambridge, and afterwards Chancellor of that university. It was then that in gratitude he erected a statue to that best of monarchs, his patron and benefactor, and inscribed it with a becomingly truthful inscription :

" Georgio Secundo
Patrono suo optimo merenti,
Semper venerando
Quod volenti Populo
Justissime, humanissime,
In Pace et in Bello
Feliciter imperavit—
Quod, academiam Cantabrigiensem

Fovit, auxit, ornavit.
Thomas Holles
Dux de Newcastle
Academiae Cancellarius."

What a procession of titles and honours! and all derived from one talent, a solitary gift of cunning! A brilliant example of successful roguery, shall we say? But what an England it was then, when foul play and false dealing were the fashion in every rank! We know what the Court was then, with its German ladies. Never was there a time which abounded more in witnesses against itself: let us select from amongst them.

There was, for instance, the Chudleigh. What an illustration of the time this lady presents; of both times—of that reign and the following one—the reign of the decent George. Step into the witness box, Miss Chudleigh, and tell us all you know—the truth this once, for novelty; 'twill be a new sensation if you do, and you have pretty well exhausted every other. We put the lady in as documentary proof in this case, and the registrar of

the Court duly marks her as proper evidence to go to the jury.

What a famous Chudleigh! but what facilities were then at Court. To be married, for example, did not matter for a "maid," even to be ever so much married. Miss Chudleigh was, in that American sense, "well married" indeed. Also, while a wife she lived with another gentleman, and then she married over again—twice, and both husbands alive together, and a maid of honour all the time! no wonder she reaped the reward of such surprising energy—court receptions, public honours, a fortune, and a ducal coronet.

George II. wooed Miss Chudleigh, the Maid of Honour; then the Duke of Kingston, Mrs. Hervey; then George III., the moral George, embraces her Grace the Duchess of Kingston before the assembled Court. They are all three the same—Maid, Madame, and Duchess. Few even of the German ladies did better than the Chudleigh, though they had advantages beyond her. They surpassed her in ugliness, for example, and that

was fashionable, but she beat them hollow in badness, and that was more fashionable still; she took the royal prize from them all there. Her experiences were more varied and comprehensive, also her profit greater; besides, she "wound up respectable." A Duchess! and married over and over again. What more respectable! Walpole applies a sentence to another Duchess: "all the Royals were in love with her, and the Duke was so in *all the forms*." That was eminently true of her Grace of Kingston; she first appears in the world at one of the subscription masquerades, and Walpole was there to see her. "Miss Chudleigh was Iphigenia," he writes, "but so naked that you would have taken her for Andromeda." Naturally the royal eyes follow in the same direction, and with what result we are duly informed:

"I told you we are to have another jubilee masquerade," continues Walpole; "there was one by the King's command for Miss Chudleigh, the Maid of Honour, with whom our gracious monarch has a mind to believe himself in love—so much in

love that at one of the booths he gave her a fairing for her watch, which cost him five and thirty guineas, actually disbursed out of his privy purse, and not charged to the civil list. Whatever you may think of it, this is a more magnificent present than the cabinet which the late King of Poland sent to the fair Countess of Konismark, replete with all kinds of baubles and ornaments, and ten thousand ducats in one of the drawers. I hope some future Holinshed, or Stowe, will acquaint posterity *that five and thirty guineas were an immense sum in those days.*

"King George the Second and I don't agree in our explanation of this text of ceremony; he approves Miss Chudleigh in a point where ceremony is out of the question—he opened the trenches before her a fortnight ago at the masquerade (another masquerade), but at the last she had the gout and could not come; he went away fort cross."

However, her fortunes proceed; she became one of the Herveys, then she ceased to remain one of them. A woman of her spirit consent to be a

midshipman's wife, merely because she was married to him!

A leaf from the parish register is excised in order to commit bigamy with security; then her fortunes proceed. In March, '69, his Grace the Duke of Kingston was married to the Hon. Miss Chudleigh, one of the Maids of Honour to the Dowager Princess of Wales. We know what followed then, 'tis history; but immediately after the marriage the chronicle records that her Grace was presented to their Majesties at St. James's, who honoured her Grace by wearing her favours, as did all the great officers of state.

Imagine it! All the high officials raddled with the Chudleigh favours. What an imposing presentation it must have been. Fancy the huzzaing at the Palace gate, the press, the bowing of gold sticks, the huddling of chamberlains in the antechamber around her Grace, the attention and reverent whisperings, the incense burning in those courtly eyes, the rows of grinning noble faces—it was sublime! One sees the tossing carriage of the

bedizened bride, with her hard, unwomanly stare. What a triumph! Were there any lawn sleeves present in the admiring circle of bystanders? Perhaps! A famous church dignitary had left some lines behind him which might have been directly addressed to her Grace then:

> "Obscure by birth, renown'd by crimes,
> Still changing names, religions, climes,
> At length she turns, a bride:
> In di'monds, pearls, and rich brocades
> She shines, the first of batter'd jades,
> And flutters in her pride.
>
> "So have I known those insects fair
> (Which curious *Germans* hold so rare),
> Still vary shapes and dyes:
> Still gain new titles with new forms,
> First grubs obscene, then wriggling worms,
> Then painted butterflies."

Yet Doctor Swift was a courtier, and not over-squeamish, and for all his genius was a slave at heart, and loved a Duchess as much as ever did his countryman, Tom Moore, a Duke; and if he had been there, would no doubt have applauded like the rest. But, surely, high-born British dames

sent their daughters away from the contamination of that sight; gathered up their hooped petticoats, and stood by, grim and moral, as the brazen Maid of Honour flaunted into the Presence. As if such prudery was not then in vogue? The faithful chronicles of the time are particular in telling us whether it was or not, for we read that "Her Grace the Duchess of Kingston wears pendent on her left shoulder the picture of the Electress of Saxony, and, from her example, other ladies begin to wear miniature portraits in the same manner." So her Grace leads the fashion in tags and miniatures, and the ladies of this Court—the moral Court—copy it. There were other fashions also introduced by her Grace. Did they copy them? What a history, what a time, what an example, what a moral it points! When cogged dice rattled in every dice-box in the kingdom, and we beat the French by land and sea, and ladies of quality got drunk—*passe encore*—but drunk on negus. Ye Gods! did any man ever hear the like of that? Conceive it who can. Fancy Jeames going about in his false calves,

gilded, padded, powdered—rosettes in his pumps—handling a tray filled with the dingy wine-glasses of the period, loaded with that foolish refreshment.

A lady has a surfeit of lemonade at a masquerade, and gets not dead drunk, but dead in earnest of it, and a sympathetic poet commemorates the tragic event:

> "Poor Jenny Conway!
> She drank lemonade
> At a masquerade,
> So now she's dead and gone away."

But times are changed. We are strong in our vainglorious wisdom and virtue now; we have given up negus; lemonade has disappeared; we have no Chudleighs leading the fashion in tags and miniatures, or shameful manners. Ours is a moral Court. There is nothing to call a blush on honest cheeks; no dissolute princes, no party leaders of doubtful principle, no shallow personages in power, no public reputations that require the aid of a bolster to sustain them.

There is no puffery now, *bien entendu*, no plastering up of shams, no blowing of venal horns

The nation has become more decent and regular in its hours and habits. Many more English people must go to Heaven now than formerly; at least, if they don't go to Heaven, it is not for want of going to church at present. Look at London on a Sunday forenoon with processions of church-goers trooping through the streets—what an edifying picture! If there was an earthquake panic now, as there was in the year of grace 1750, ladies of quality would not drive out to a country inn to avoid the chance of being engulfed in the ruins of the town during the night, or if so, would not sit up till five in the morning, playing brag in a public-house, waiting for the judgment to be over, as they did a hundred years ago. We are greatly improved. But how will it all sound by-and-by? Can the good liquor stand bottling up for a century or so and keep its strength and flavour? That is the test. We see everything behind clearly enough at present, but how about the view straight on? Everybody knows now what sort of a patriot and politician Newcastle was, what his intellectual

capacity, what his morals and endowments were. It is not in the power of mural tablets or monumental brass to falsify the truth; but what did the press say on these subjects then? How did it guide and instruct public opinion?

How did it perform its judicial office yesterday? Would it act impartially as a public commentator to-day, under similar conditions, if some "great and conscientious character" of a kindred type were called up for judgment? What greater gloria could any public instrument perform than the organs of the time sang over the corpse of George the Second's Duke? Glancing through the pages of the time, we learn, "That his Grace was one of the most disinterested patriots that either this or any other nation could boast of; his estate, when he first came into possession of it, is said to have been worth £50,000 per annum, which he greatly reduced in the service of his King and country; notwithstanding which he nobly refused a large pension when he retired from public business. In private life his character was the most amiable,

affable, and religious. He caused divine service to be constantly and regularly performed every day in his family. Both in town and country, and at proper stated times, the sacrament was administered, at which he constantly assisted with great devotion. He received it the day he died from the hands of the Bishop of Salisbury, and yielded up his breath with the most perfect calmness and resignation."

Again: "By the liberal use he had made of a great fortune, by the obligations which in a course of many years, and in a succession of great employments, he was enabled to confer on some of the most considerable people in the kingdom, he had attached a great number to his fortunes. He was in reality well qualified in many respects to be the chief of a party, from his unbounded liberality, from his affability, magnificence, and personal disinterestedness. Even the defects and faults, which might have appeared in his character, were rather of a service to him, as they often tended to soften resentments, and helped to give that

power, of which he was possessed, an appearance less formidable."

"His appointment to the office of First Commissioner of His Majesty's Exchequer," says another biographer, "was received by the nation with general approbation; his Grace's early and uninterrupted zeal shown in support of his Majesty and his Royal Family, and his unwearied diligence in the execution of the high trusts reposed in him, being indubitable pledges of his attachment to the Protestant succession, and of the continuance of his disinterested attention to the welfare of the country."

And so on flows the tide of compliment. What more could be said than this, even were he some prominent character of contemporaneous history? For also in our time, hypocrisy be thanked, sanctity and patriotism are not incompatible with eminence, at least with office. Were it at this moment some famous third-rate man of the great and good order which should be translated to the "heavenly spheres," a great minister say, such as

Newcastle was, one with as little taint of popery, as leal a devotion to the Hanoverian succession and the Protestant interest as the tricksy old Duke himself, endowed with all those virtues which his Grace's biographer enumerates—what more could be said? But would not all this be said over again? Whatever the truth—aye, now? In England there must always be a "heaven-born" minister of some kind; we cannot get on without it. But the other day Palmerston was one. The Treasury Bench is a sancta sedes. Talk of Rome, forsooth! When did the Pope advance such pretensions to dogma, aye! and to holiness, as a minister with a good working majority in his hand? It only requires an ignorant or a servile House to make an excellent "heaven-born minister" at any time; one in whose person arrogance and self-righteousness are sacred attributes, whose virtues stand arranged peep-show fashion, to be gazed at by the world only through a magnifying glass. But what matter? Were all England to have a pocket-handkerchief to its nose this moment, blubbering over

the loss of such a one, lamenting as it doubtless would through the columns of its broadsheets—what then? Do you suppose our children will not discover the cheat, and poke out the truth, and set the sham up naked in the pillory of history, stript of its tawdry rags, for all the columns of windy adulation, the leaded type, and mourning bands of the penny papers?

CHAPTER II.

AN OPPORTUNITY DEFERRED.

"HENRY! stand into the light—handsome as ever—improved—decidedly improved. Ah! at your years time is a flatterer, and only touches to embellish. Stand up, sir, till I judge; it is an age since I shook hands with so well-bred a relative; but the Clintons always had that, whatever else they wanted; men and women, they had all handsome faces; the Pelhams too. Catherine is very pretty; your children will be a credit to me. Hem! Turn now to the window. Something pale perhaps, quite becomingly so considering your position and expectations, exactly so;" and the Duke moved his nephew round with one hand, his spy-glass in the other. "Exactly the beau-ideal of a *beau garçon* in the fetters of the tender

passion. A happy melancholy—the true sentimental air; a blush of colour or an ounce of flesh more would be ruin—precisely the right point of finish. Hamlet — Romeo — some of these people—with a blue ribbon now, a guitar and a Spanish rapier, you would look uncommonly well singing fallals before the footlights. Hem! a good coat, a well-cut sleeve. Sit down, sir; you look like a gentleman. I am proud of you—give me an account of yourself;" and the Duke pushed forward a chair, plunged himself back into it, and lay looking at his nephew, a picture of placid patronage and contentment. "How did you fare in Scotland with the grouse? What sort were the pointers Henry sent from Esher? Good sport, I trust; and how do you find me looking? Lean, bilious, I fear; overwork—overwork, Harry." The Duke was on his feet again peering into the mirror. "Eyes look heavyish and dark, eh?"

"You exhaust yourself with work, no wonder you should look pale, uncle," said Lincoln, artfully, with a dutiful accent.

"Pale!" screamed the Duke, twirling round; "pale! Jervis!" he cried out, striking the signal bell on the table. "Screw, tell Mr. Jerningham to send that d—— careless scoundrel Jervis about his business; this very day, mind you," he added, as the door opened. "Here, my Lord Lincoln finds me looking ill, and I have been ill ever since leaving the carriage. I told him so, I knew the cushions were damp, and here's the proof of it—and see! send to Dr. Lytton with my commands to attend here—promptly—do you hear? To think that a careless footman should have power to upset the health of a man in whose hands the destinies of the country are placed," added the Duke, flinging back again in an exhausted way, and fanning himself with the pocket-handkerchief, which as a provision for tearful emergencies he always carried in his hand. "Ah, Henry! He who consults his happiness will never hold the reins of state. Ambition is vanity, believe me. Nothing but the sense of doing—doing one's duty—the approval of a good conscience, and the

certitude of doing service to the state, can console a man for the sacrifices of comfort which he makes at every moment. AMOR VINCIT PATRIÆ, that is the whole of it in a word. What does it signify how I look, whether my health be broken or not, if I can only spend myself in duty to my king and country? AMOR VINCIT—that family motto has been the guiding principle of my life; and if I should lay down that life in the service of my mistress England, what nobler destiny for man? A few years more or less, what matter?—when passed, forgotten. Stat nominis umbra! hem! To think that scoundrel should have placed a damp cushion under a person of my consequence! You might murder a man with a damp seat as directly as with a knife; he ought to be hanged at Tyburn for it. Lord, what a pile of work! how it rises on one like a tide," he added, turning distractedly to the table. "Here is something! but stop; I should not tell you. I shall not mention names, but the paper is marked Carlton House—marked confidential also; mind

that; and here—private also—something fresh from the other side over the water. However, I shall have to go there yet, ill as I am—no rest, no consideration, no peace for a man who shares the royal confidence. A nice convulsion if I were to mention the nature of this communication to you, or if this document should fall under any other eye in the kingdom. Is it not odd, Harry, that I am treated with confidences which the supposed favourite is not allowed to share? That my advice is asked for on matters which as yet the first minister does not dream of? That in the delicate negotiations now going on between Kensington and Carlton House, nobody is trusted but myself? There is such a thing as a King's minister as well as a Queen's minister in England, Harry, and future historians will have to remember that. Ha, ha! people will discover more than they dream of when the secrets of my day come to be dragged into light;" and the Duke rubbed his hands gleefully, then, with a sudden anxiety, bent over the table strewn with papers,

and snatching up a pen began to write, or pretended to write, in an eager hurried way, for he was never above doing a stroke of comedy, and even his nephew was not too insignificant an audience for him to perform before.

"I have recently travelled up from Easton Neston—Lady—Lord Pomfret's place. You must know it, a fine old house by Towcester, in Northamptonshire, you recollect—at least I think I recollect having said something to you about going down there during the summer," said Lincoln with a constrained carelessness, as the pen went on spluttering away.

"That would be on your return from Scotland, when you stopped at Nottingham Castle, no doubt; and how are they all there? What about old Dudley, the steward? His wife got the small-pox, and I have been afraid to go down ever since; has the infection disappeared? Lord, here are two more letters, and a whole list of signatures for this night's messenger."

"You may recollect I said something about

going down there in the winter," said Lincoln, full of his subject.

"To Nottingham? Not at all; I have no recollection of the kind," said the Duke, bending over his papers.

"To Easton Neston, Lord Pomfret's place, as I say," Lincoln repeated in a louder tone, blurting out the words any end foremost; they sounded chillingly distinct. In the pause which followed perhaps he would have withdrawn them willingly: his heart quavered during that slight interval; he had fired the first shot, as it were, and so provoked the encounter; but he was not enamoured with the smell of his own powder; nobody is at first: it was his maiden experiment in an engagement of the kind, and every novice is timid.

"Easton Neston—Lord Pomfret—by Towcester?" repeated the Duke. "Who the deuce is Lord Pomfret?"

"A fine old-fashioned place in Northamptonshire, comfortable and picturesque; and there are

some uncommon pictures—no, marbles there; some capital statues which people greatly admire," Lincoln hurried on with a quavering voice.

"Pomfret—you must mean the Earl Pomfret. My Earl, the man who was created by his wife. Lady Sundon's Master of the Horse—the diamond earring scandal. Oh, is that it?" said the Duke, laying aside his pen. "By Towcester, you say—exactly. Splendid pictures and scenery, and that sort of thing—comfortable house, and I dare say very respectable people. Did they introduce you to Edward the Confessor there by chance? Her ladyship is mother, surely—mother to the other lady. She of the famous yellow hair, of whom we have heard before. I miss the name at present—what is it? Lady—Lady Susanna, Rosanna, or something. The girl whom Holderness pursues—of course it is the same. In fact, the old Florentine set have assembled afresh in Northamptonshire, and you have cut into the game again, and gone down to Towcester to admire the pictures and statues, and all the curiosities and beauties, native

and foreign, there besides; that has been your amusement during this very hot weather. Very good, Harry, very good. Every man has a right to hold his own opinion as to what is becoming and fitting, and I quarrel with no man's taste—hem!" The Duke was hurriedly folding up or shaking out a huge official parchment, garnished with tabs and seals, and stamped impressions. It kept on a crackling accompaniment as he spoke. "But what in the name of fortune took you down into the middle of them again? Tell me, Harry, what did you want there? You of all men in the world, and of all times at this critical time," said the Duke, turning briskly round confronting his nephew.

"In the first place I happened to be in the neighbourhood. Then I had been invited by Lady Pomfret, and promised her a visit: besides, I desired to go there. In fact, I would be there still—this moment, but that I wanted to see you, and came up to town especially for the purpose, and was disappointed to find you had gone down

to Claremont," said Lincoln hardily, feeling his blood was beginning to warm.

"To see me! and what on earth could you want me for? I am sorry you interrupted your pleasant visit on my account," said the Duke.

"It was a pleasant visit," said Lincoln.

"I'm delighted to hear it, 'pon my honour," rejoined his uncle dryly.

"At the same time I am very glad that we meet now. It is time we should have a conversation on a very important subject—I fear not a pleasant one—on this very subject, in fact." Lincoln would have begun his history on the spot then, but the Duke was too wary, and anticipated him.

"High time, Lincoln," said the old man briskly, "high time that you and I should come to an understanding; and I am glad of the opportunity you have contrived for doing it." The Duke slipped round dexterously, and took the lead in the dialogue at once.

"You have been down to Towcester. I come to the point, you see—mind, I shall not say a word

about the mother, this Lady Pomfret—professional crimp as she is, nor either refer to Lady Susanna herself, the nymph of the yellow hair. You have been down at their old place, and they furbished it up for the occasion, and you amused yourself there in a foolish, boyish fashion, no doubt—fished in the river, raked up the haycocks, gathered nosegays with the girls in the morning, and dangled with them over the harpsichord in the evening. A game of commerce, or forfeits, a mawkish duet, or a mawkish flirtation—such things must be. A young fellow—one must have distractions. A man of your age takes himself to Florence or to Northamptonshire for sport in the season, exactly as to Leicestershire or to the Highlands, to a bagnio, a hazard table, or a cock-pit. Stuff!—don't tell me. Do you take me for a fool, or want to make me think you one? Hear me out; don't flare up until I have done. I pay you the compliment of crediting you with some intelligence—control yourself, and attend. Until a man is thrust into business, or harnessed to office, or worried

to death by its cares and slavery, heaven help me! until he obtains a place in the machinery of life, and finds himself fitting into the cogs which push him along—vis a tergo, Lincoln,—which drive him—until then, he must have ways of passing the time; and I quarrel with no man's ways. But in some respects he may go too far in his pleasures and follies, and you have, I think, gone far enough already. You will understand me better if I am plainer—and I shall be plain enough. In a word, Lincoln, I think you ought to be married at once."

"I am of the same opinion," said Lord Lincoln.

"It delights me to hear it," continued the Duke in the same rapid way. "Catherine is now quite old enough; her father is of that opinion; so am I. In fact, there is no reason why the ceremony should be deferred. Why not have everything done at once? You blush, you rogue. Why not, when it would content everybody? yourself, and all of us—you most of all. I see it in your eyes. Why not have it all arranged before I

set out for Hanover, that is, if I do set out? By-the-way, it would furnish me with a fresh excuse for delaying my excursion; that would be another consideration, and a comfort to me; and as for the King——"—here a knock at the door, and a secretary entered bearing a package, which the Duke burst open, fingering it in a worried, official, fluttering way—"while the King will consent to everything I ask. I have only to suggest a thing to have it done. In fact, I have already solicited his Majesty to have the patent of the dukedom continued to you and your heirs; and his Majesty most graciously consents. By the Lord, here it is! How very apropos! Here is the draught of the patent fresh from the Treasury lawyers.

"GEORGIUS, &c., &c.

"Cum regii muneris et dignitatis fit nobilissimos juvenes ad majorum merita non solum imitanda—em! em! Sed suis etiam virtutibus em, &c."

"It is unnecessary to proceed with that," said Lincoln, interrupting; "as matters stand, a docu-

ment of that nature may never have either interest or importance for me."

"Bless me! who does it concern, then, if not you, my heir, to whom everything I possess in the world goes, along with the title? You will be the next Duke of Newcastle, Lincoln; that is as certain as that you will marry Catherine Pelham, as certain as anything can be; and a comfortable position you will be in then I can promise you. Bother, don't interrupt! I know what you would say—I repeat, you may take the wall of any man in England for rank and fortune when I am gone, and when you are married, which I trust will be long before the other event takes place. Tut! 'tis unnecessary to speak—I know you don't desire that, however much you may the other happiness, and very naturally do; but you don't wish for the old man's death in order to grasp his spoils—not you? I know you better than to think so. A good boy, Lincoln! always the best natured fellow alive. Ahem! what a joy for me to see my children happy! ahem! ugh, here is the cough

again; all the result of a damp cushion; that assassin Jervis! ugh! It comes on me that way like a spasm. I sometimes think that I shall go off in a spasm in the night, Lincoln. You may wake any morning and find yourself in my shoes, and in my coronet. The throat has been always a treacherous organ with us; there were my nephews, Henry's two sons, Thomas and Henry, both dead. They both died of the same affection, the throat. Lucky for you. Thomas would have been my heir if he lived, but he died of a spasm in the throat at the early age of only ten years and twenty-eight days; and though his life was so short he already gave proofs of so promising a genius that his loss was generally lamented by every well-wisher to his country. That is gospel truth, for you may see it in the peerage; but unfortunately he is in heaven, and you will be in the dukedom. You will fill his place worthily——what is it, Mr. Hudson?"

The Duke's cough stopped miraculously as his chamberlain appeared in the doorway. He was a large man with a paunch and a frill, a bald head and

shoe buckles, and a black sword, for he was a gentleman by birth, the youngest son of a threadbare Norfolk baronet. He advanced across the room, now walking as light as a cat in his pumps and shoe buckles, for all his size. He was deep in the confidence of his Grace, and stooped to pour his business privately into his ear.

"This is very distressing, very inopportune indeed," said the Duke, addressing his nephew: "here the secretary to the Modenese embassy is waiting below, and I must see him. I'm afraid I must send you away, Harry."

"But it is most necessary that I should explain myself this moment," objected Lincoln, "now that we have opened the subject. You have no idea of what my feelings are on this matter. I must set you right on that before all things."

"Ah, again!"

Here the secretary, Wilmot, and the under secretary appeared together at the door with anxious faces, and Lincoln stopped as they spoke to the Duke.

"Why here is Doctor Butterfield about a prebend for his son. I must see him also," cried out the Duke, "and the Bishop of St. David's, the puppy; what does he want again? Mr. Wilmot, the Bishop was always a Whig, and we are sure of him. He can't change his politics now, nor give us serious trouble. No use in throwing any more good things away on him, does he take me for a fool? I'll not bother about seeing him—and ah—umph—so—Peebles, Jemmy Peebles the Hollingsford attorney, he wants a tide-waitership for his nephew. I don't see how it is possible to turn him out, and he has come up to town on purpose. Ah! Lincoln, 'tis not such an easy matter as it looks to govern England, as you see. My hands are full enough to-day, you must positively go. I have only to add," dropping his voice, "I have only to add, that everything considered"—the Duke slipped his arm round his nephew's neck, and hugged his ear quite close—"that everything considered, it might perhaps be as well if we had no more dangling after the goddess—the Lady Susanna. It can

lead to nothing but mischief in your position, and there has been quite enough of it, perhaps, already. In your place, I would not go down again to Towcester. I think it would be better not, Harry. What is it, Mr. Harris? Bless me! surprising audacity. You don't mean that Hanley is downstairs again? Wanting something else, of course? There is no filling that fellow, there is no bottom to him—but an important personage in a certain sense—one of the Bloomsbury Square gang. In his way, of weight, but thirsty as a sponge; he has no conscience. However, we must hold him if we cannot fill him. Be civil to Hanley, Mr. Wilmot. He'll want a fee now by way of election expenses—he affects so much delicacy, the scamp—a fee it must be, not a tip. As if we can afford to bribe every understrapper in the House; yet this is an upper understrapper enough. Yet £500 ought to do; he'll fetch his price elsewhere if we don't buy him. He has influence in the borough—£500—a lot of money in £500 for a fellow like him; he has been spoiled by having too much already. However, we must have

Hanley up first, the Modenese can wait; as for the bishop, capital business for him to wait. Be good enough to tell him so, flatly. I'll see no bishops to-day, I'm tired of lawn sleeves; they are always here," added the Duke, reflectively; "and this St. David's is as hungry as a crocodile—as an attorney—as a royal highness; he is for ever cringing about places for everybody. Hem! worrying me to death at this moment when, mein Gott in Himmel, as his Majesty, God bless him! says, I am about to set out for Hanover, perhaps. Lincoln, you will have to go away at once. Hanover! mein Gott! I must refresh my German. I wish the King of Prussia, or the Pretender, or somebody would swallow up that Hanover; that is, only for the sake of his beloved Majesty, I could almost wish it. We shall have St. David's wriggling upstairs by-and-by, in spite of every precaution; I can see that. Look to it, Mr. Wilmot, there is no keeping that prelate off, no snubbing him, with his attachment to the Protestant succession, and devotion to my grace, old Methodist jobber. And to have to go

to Hanover after all, in my health, leaving all the comforts of life, at my age; and everybody, all the town, thinking that I am going, and I too have to make them right in it after all. It's enough to upset me," said the Duke, searching among the papers for his pocket-handkerchief, which had slipped away. "Henry, for the present you must go and leave me to deal with these harpies. I am bothered out of my wits."

"I'll wait in an ante-room, but I'll not quit the house until we talk out my business to the end," said Lincoln, sturdily, staring at the surrounding secretaries, who, in obedience to a sign from the Duke, were bowing him towards the door.

"Oh, to be sure, that can be settled in five minutes—not worth talking about—we'll manage that. That's an uncommonly well-cut coat, so galliard in the skirt, now that you are walking off that I can see your back; it becomes you exceedingly. By-bye! Your business won't take a moment to arrange. I wish it were possible

to give you that moment now, or that we could settle Hanley's affair so easily—how I wish it! Show him up, Wilmot—any way, you come to dinner, Lincoln, if I can't see you before then. Sir Thomas Robinson is coming—a very important man—will be a great statesman by-and-by, Sir Thomas. I should like you to meet him. Let the Modenese and the Doctor wait, Mr. Wilmot. Send the bishop away, and let me have Hanley upstairs, presently. No; let him wait ten minutes; let him cool in the ante-room—'twill have a better effect. Say I am reading despatches from Hanover, Wilmot," said the Duke, throwing a critical eye at the window when Lincoln had gone, "and see, drop that blind. He is always peering into one's face to make out what one thinks; a prying fellow, Hanley; I mistrust him. He may be bribed; they may have got hold of him; he may be sent over here smelling about to find whether I am going to Hanover or not. Show him up after ten minutes. No! let him wait twenty—twenty is better; and see, Wilmot, try and get my Lord Lincoln out of

the house some way, will you? quietly, the best you can. I don't want to see him again, not during business hours, if I can help it. Manage to get him off some way, he is in my way here; now go, and in twenty minutes Hanley may come. As for the bishop, let him go about his business."

Then the Duke signalled the fat chamberlain, and gave him whispering instruction apart from Wilmot and the other secretary.

CHAPTER III.

VINCIT AMOR.

Lord Lincoln found himself guided along a passage crowded with servants and attendants; then he was ushered or bustled away into a small library or waiting room: this was one of his grace's private apartments, as the fussy old chamberlain informed him. There was no shaking off the garrulous old man, who was doubtless acting on instructions. "Would my lord look at the 'News' Letter?' or the 'Annual Register,' the last number just out? or the 'Bath Chronicle?' Everybody was at Bath this season; the place was quite full, on account of his Majesty's departure. My Lord Chesterfield had already gone, but Sir Robert Walpole was at Newmarket. Sir Robert had been first to Harrogate; Bath did not agree with

him. From Harrogate he had gone straight on to the race meeting. The sport was indifferent this year. One Courtney, a gambler, had had his ears shorn for cheating. Would my lord choose to have refreshment served up while he waited? Did my lord think there would ever be fine weather in England again? Would he choose to glance at Mr. Pope's new poem? here was the volume uncut."

But Lincoln was in a fume; his bristles were all erect, and not to be smoothed back by the skilful hand of this officious old comforter. He had been trifled with, that was his first angry impression; then he thought it might be only the peculiar manner of the Duke: for it was one of the mysteries about Newcastle, that people were never certain whether his actions were the result of deliberation, or accident, or imperfect manner. Then Lincoln grew angry with himself. Why had he gone away so meekly, instead of blurting out his business at once? The Duke would have listened readily enough if he suspected the subject he had

to disclose. So he reflected, pacing to and fro in a miff, after the peremptory dismissal of the smirking chamberlain. In half an hour afterwards he had decided on resolute action, and executed it at once. He marched straight back again through the passage, amidst the throng of wondering menials. "Was my lord going to enter his grace's presence unannounced? Gracious goodness, my lord! his grace is at the moment most deeply employed!" said the pale chamberlain, protruding his bald head from a neighbouring office, and bounding across the passage to bar the way to the door of the sanctuary. But Lord Lincoln moved him aside with his finger, and the other officials fell back, awed by his quality and air.

The Duke was standing before a full length mirror, having the buckle of his wig fastened by his valet; his hat was already set on, the wig was frizzled out on either side; in one hand a cane which the King had given him, in the other a snuff-box, a gift from the Prince: he was about slipping away then, the old fox, and

Lincoln had headed him back barely in the nick of time.

"Ah! glad you are here still, I feared you had gone away," said the Duke, gaily shuffling out of his surprise. "Do you have a seat in my coach Carlton House way? See, Screw, that buckle galls the instep;" and the Duke lifted his leg painfully to a footstool, and Mr. Screw went down on his knee and proceeded to arrange the broad shoebuckle, of which his Gracious Majesty was said to have himself imported the pattern from Hanover, shortly after his accession to the throne of his British dominions.

"I wish to say something further about my affairs. I must settle about my business this moment, whatever inconvenience it gives you," said Lincoln in a determined tone, looking at the servant.

"Go about your business, Screw, but wait below," said the Duke. "Eh, the marriage—marriage! like all you young fellows; as if there was nothing else to be done in this world, always turning on love and marriage. Get it over quickly, however;

make it short, whatever it is; as I am due at Carlton House. I really cannot see what more we have to say on the subject; however, I am patient;" and the Duke began to fidget the royal cane and glance at the time-piece on the mantel-piece, and at the head of Minerva, looking sarcastically wise above it.

"You have arranged that this marriage with my cousin is to be?"

"No, you arranged it yourself," replied the Duke dryly. "Your own doing: I am at best but the old Pandar bringing our pretty Troilus and blushing Juliette, or Cressid, whichever she was, together. Sometimes a thankless office; but I don't care if you are only happy; I am rewarded; and you should be the happiest young fellow within the seas of Britain this moment. If not, boys are more fish-blooded than they were in my day; we were made of warmer stuff;" and the Duke helped himself from the jewelled snuff-box with the crest of his Royal Highness on the lid, the three ostrich feathers prettily drawn in diamonds and enamel.

"I wish I were dead!" said Lincoln in a hollow voice.

A quantity of snuff dropped out of the Prince's box and slobbered the ducal knee.

"A confoundedly well-mannered observation, 'pon my life!" exclaimed the uncle. "Remember, sir, the lady is my worthy niece, a Pelham too! Your affianced wife! Rubbish, Harry, you afraid of marriage?"

"It may be I shall never marry. There are peculiar reasons—events, things that have recently occurred while—which must at all events prevent what you refer to; that is now impossible, fairly, altogether impossible." A glance into the white face of his nephew, and the Duke's instinct divined a real difficulty; distress was visibly painted there. But the uncle's features were a study, as gradually the first flash of anxiety faded into a quizzical leer, and suspicion deepened into conviction. Then came a dry chuckle, as he re-opened the snuff-box daintily. "You don't gamble or quarrel; money is out of the question with your fortune. At your

age a dice-box, a duello, or " (pinch) " what is the other cause which is at the root of every young gentleman's distress? My nephew Henry, most of us old fellows have been young some time or other. We have all had capers in our day, and not many of us are much worse the cutting of them, I dare say," chuckled this powdered and frizzled old hypocrite, through his false teeth; who had a chaplain to mumble a grace at his table every day, and a dean or a bishop for state occasions. " At your age!—by-the-way, I trust she is good looking, la belle—'twill make it no worse that she should bear a decent face, you understand, quite otherwise! the scandal is always greater in the case of an ugly woman; the creatures themselves are proud of it, you see, and publish, tis an 'advertisement for them. There was his popish Majesty King James, for instance, and his blessed ma——hump! many other illustrious examples in that way, both living and dead, who would have fared better at the hand of public opinion if their improper selections had been in better taste. Ah! Oh! to be sure;

high ropes if you please. Just as you like," added the Duke, laughing out at Lincoln's shrug of disgust.

"It is very wrong and nonsensical and sentimental, and that sort of thing. Egad! Sir Gilley, Galladad, Gallahad, whatever the man's name was—all the same to me, any way you please. They have given me every nickname under the sun; but no one has ever called old Newcastle a prude, not yet," added this grinning old sinner. "Though I don't see why she should not be good looking, when the morality of it is all the same—'twould be more creditable to the family taste, which has always been excellent. However, we waste time. A sum of money will settle the affair one way or other. Eh! dear." The Duke had been rocking about on his uncertain legs, whisking his cane, and now his handkerchief slipped down and he had to stoop to pick it up himself. Lincoln let him stoop, so enraged was he. As the Duke raised himself again the lumbago seized him in the back. And then Lincoln thundered out—

"I cannot marry my cousin Catherine, for I have engaged myself to another."

"Engaged! what's engaged? Do you mean, eh!" —another twinge. "Do you mean engaged to be married?" cried out the Duke, with his hand on his back, and his face shrivelled up as if touched with a hot wire, from the combined assaults of agony, shock, and surprise. "Catherine! engaged! Is it that you reject Catherine? is that what you want me to gather—is that it?" he screamed, drawing up to his full height and flourishing his cane, as he glared at his nephew.

"I am a miserable wretch any way you look at it," said Lincoln.

"That you are, if this be your meaning!"

"But I cannot place her in the position of an unloved wife," murmurs the nephew doggedly. "She is too good for me, a thousand times too good; I cannot do it; and now it's out, and I won't," he added stoutly.

"Reject Catherine Pelham! break your word and mine, and her heart! A match that I arranged for

you. Hold your tongue, sir! don't speak to me. I should not be alive another hour if such a thing were possible. Reject Catherine—an angel! She never offended mortal; as good a child as ever breathed. With her own share of family beauty —accomplished—of our family! Pelham features! The wealth and inheritance of our house besides! A match for any king's son in Europe, by ——. A match for a prince of the blood, to come and ask for on his knees; and you reject her! Lincoln, you are making a fool of yourself, or a fool of me. Your head is wandering. Get out of my sight, sir. As well come and say you intend to cut your throat."

Lincoln muttered something about his readiness for any desperate extremity.

"What! violate a solemn engagement? Cover yourself with disgrace — worse, with ridicule! Ridicule, sir! think of that. Would you put your name in every mouth? Fancy my position! My niece discarded, my heir a common laughing-stock; a man in my position, at the head of the empire almost! Then the family disunion! Con-

sider my brother's position. Stuff! Send for a practitioner and have yourself blooded. Lytton will be here presently; get him to relieve your brain. A marriage that you accepted yourself, made yourself, arranged yourself!"

"I was entangled into it," retorted Lincoln, with heat, "or I did not understand my mind at the time. It was unfair to fetter my future in a matter so personal and vital. I question now the authority which made this engagement for me."

"Authority? You made it yourself; you accepted it yourself. Nobody else could do that for you," rejoined the Duke. "Nobody thrust you in anywhere that you did not choose to go to." The Duke was right here, and pressed the point with a conviction of its strength. "Where was your first visit on returning to England? To Esher. Nobody carried you down there like a baby in arms, I suppose. You presented yourself of your own accord as her affianced husband. Did you, or not?"

"I am a miserable man," said Lincoln; and he

passed his hand in a distracted way to his brow, tossing the hair which the faithful Alphonse had buckled up so neatly. It tumbled about his face—the hair. The flour escaped and spattered down over his collar, his cuff, the sleeve with the handsome Parisian flourishes in gold shining through the Mechlin ruffle. Then his eyes fell to the earth, and he stood a picture of mute despair, contemplating his French shoes. He had a beautiful leg, with a rose-coloured ribbon binding it at the knee.

"You are about the luckiest fellow of your age and inches in Europe," said the Duke.

"But I love some one else better than my cousin," blurted out Lincoln. "That's the truth. I admit it. I cannot help it. If I marry Catherine it will be against my inclination. Would that be for her happiness? After this avowal, which is it better—to betray her into such a union or else break off while there is time? Would you condemn two people to certain misery for life? As for myself, this marriage means ruin—ruin to me. It will strike

at the root of my ambition. Poison my disposition. I shall turn desperate if you force me into it. Adopt evil habits, plunge into any resource or distraction—disgrace you while alive, and dying curse you all," exclaimed Lincoln, with a fine tragic vehemence. "That is what will happen if you drive me to do it."

"If you should fancy dice, and low company, and marry the Lady Rosanna, there is Lord Lempster, the future brother-in-law. You will not have to go far out of the family for recreation of that kind, in that case," said the Duke. "But understand that, as long as I am alive, I look on you as much the husband of Catherine Pelham as if the blessing had been already spoken. I should hold to this marriage even if Henry and all the connection were opposed to it. This is the fruit of your nonsensical trip to the country," the Duke added, glaring at his nephew with a marble face. "It is the old Tuscan flame—this precious beauty that we have to thank for this return of lunacy."

"Be good enough to pronounce her name. Lady Sophia Fermor."

"Aye! Fermor? Pomfret: her mother's daughter. That air is very becoming to you.

"That air to me, Henry? I had the history of the whole affair from Spence. Aye, stare and strut, but you shall have the truth out for once. They began it in Italy; they tried to snare you there, and have been planning and plotting and hunting you about ever since. Do not think me blind, I see more clearly than people imagine. A scheming crew, a beggarly set; and they will be all beggars presently when Lempster, the heir, has squandered the last remnant of the estate. No family, no race—adventurers every one, male and female; and you dolt! you, with your nose in the air, not to see the trap under your footfall."

"Lady Sophia Fermor is incapable of a mean action."

"That is as it may be, I say nothing of her capabilities; she is accomplished, I do not doubt it. Grant that she is perfection, and that you must

have an angel for your wife, that nothing else will answer you, and that you have discovered the nonpareil yonder by Towcester; but, sir—"

The Duke drew himself erect and tried to march through the room in a dignified way. At another time Lincoln would have laughed out at the shuffling, shambling figure.

"I am Newcastle; you are my heir: the wealth and honours of the Pelhams devolve to you. Surely then I am entitled to have an opinion on the subject of your marriage; and if you choose to form a connection which brings neither position, nor honour, nor political support; which is altogether a one-sided affair, to your disadvantage; which will bring you nothing but a group of sisters-in-law to provide for, very much on the alert, and very resolved that you shall do so; a scrapegrace brother, already the talk of the town for low-bred infamy, who will squander every shilling that he can borrow or steal, and end by spunging on you; a cabbage-planting father; a sharperess mother—"

"I do not contemplate marrying the entire family," said Lincoln.

"Nor any one of them, of course you do not: but I wish to be understood very clearly, and I vow and protest that, if for a connection such as this you should jilt Catherine Pelham—you, a man of sense and honour—that neither this lady herself, nor her mother, nor Lempster, however badly he may come to want it, nor any of the pack, shall ever inherit a shilling of my wealth. Decide for yourself: but in such a case all my possessions flow away from you into another channel, as entirely as if you had never existed. The Dukedom also—the King will fix the succession on whatever relative I select: he has promised to do so, and I already named you as my adopted son; but marry Lady Sophia Fermor, and the patent shall be filled in the name of Thomas Pelham of Stamer: that once done there cannot be any changing of minds afterwards, and it would be out of my power to reinstate you again even if you should change yours. Thomas Pelham will need no pressing to comply

with the arrangement, I imagine," added the Duke in a rapid way, "and there is something in his being a Pelham; blood is thicker than water after all. It required an effort sustained only by my strong affection for yourself even to consent that our honours should pass away through you to the Clinton blood."

"I trust it may be long before the question of succession comes to be of importance to any one," said Lincoln in an uncertain voice—the threat about the Dukedom took him by surprise—"but, in truth, the consideration of giving you pain is more to me than anything else," he added.

"If the mother once understood that you had nothing to expect in reversion from old Newcastle, she would probably get over her inclination for yourself, handsome as you are," answered the Duke. "Try the effect of that news upon her: it might take the cream off your pretty face. However, you understand that I am not at all in earnest," continued the old man briskly, "as the occasion is not going to arise. I only allude to what might happen

if things were to go out of the regular course, which is impossible. Plainly, Lincoln, a marriage with Lady Sophia Fermor or anybody else is for you out of the question. Your honour as well as your hand is already pledged; there is no way out of it for you; and as a gentleman you must redeem your promise, whatever be your inclination."

"I am a scoundrel, any way you turn it; a lost and miserable man. I cannot live with tarnished honour," said Lincoln.

The Duke laughed. "There is no such thing in England as a scoundrel in our rank of life," he said gaily. "The only thing a man placed as we are may not do is to make himself ridiculous, and that I shall prevent in your case. As for your honour, my aim is to preserve it bright. That is already pledged to Catherine, and I shall take care it suffers no blemish. You have just gummed your feathers on the well-limed twig which these clever Pomfrets set to catch you; that is all; but you will recover. You exaggerate things now, but I anticipate a long and happy life for you

nevertheless. Are you, pray, the only man who ever made love to two women at the same time, and found himself in a fix between them? You will get out of the corner, take my word for it. Let us talk things over like sensible people, Harry," added the Duke, again regaining his airy tone: he plucked Lincoln by the sleeve, and drew him apart to the window, dropping his voice: "I will explain things confidentially. 'Tis as well you should understand how we are placed at once. The policy of our house—ours—observe, I regard you as one of us—has always been to stand together. As you are aware, the hereditary union of the Pelhams has passed into a proverb; it is, in fact, our great political secret—the secret of our success. There never was a difference of opinion between us brothers, and we have ever worked and thought so much in concert, that no political faction has been able to stand long against us. You may understand that one of the effects of your marriage will be to cement this happy family union. In addition, both Henry and I have a high opinion of

your talents. You have considerable natural gifts, and we dream of an eminent business position for you. I was serious when writing to you at Florence about Ireland. There is no reason why you should not have Ireland. You are inexperienced, no doubt, and that country is in anarchy, poverty and discontent; but 'tis the department where all the 'prentice hands have been tried. It demands neither skill nor knowledge. If the people grumble at your misgovernment, we can silence them with coercive measures; and if you make a mess of it, there are plenty of precedents; nearly every man of any eminence has done that already. We suppose, therefore, that you begin on Ireland. Our united efforts shall be to push you on; and we look forward to obtaining considerable power, not only a majority in Parliament, but"—in a whisper—"control over the King himself. In fact, we expect to have the whole government of the country in our hands; so that, if all goes well, Sir Robert will have leisure enough to ride with his Richmond beagles, and carouse with tipsy squires at Houghton and

Newmarket. It is a secret; but—confidentially," added the Duke, pausing to give full effect to the news—"Henry is to be First Lord of the Treasury in Lord Wilmington's place. Consider what that means, and estimate, also, what the effect of a family rupture would be at this moment; I mean, such as the violation of your engagement would be likely to bring about. If a difference on this subject should arise between my brother and myself, then we are divided; our power and influence goes to pieces, to the triumph of our many enemies, and of that greater number who envy our political spoil, and who would scramble for a share of it on our fall. We should all lose; but the heaviest loser would be yourself, and at present everything lies in your own hands. However, some characters are wanting in honourable ambition, and these considerations, perhaps, do not move you." The Duke resolved to strike a more sensitive chord. "You may be wanting in manly spirit, and do not feel the noble thirst of emulation, the craving to attain success in the race of life; some men are born

winners from the cradle, and get to the front in spite of obstacles; while there are underlings by nature, who defy the forces of kith and kindred, of wealth and influence, to push them forward. To which class you belong is yet perhaps undetermined; but few individuals of your class are wanting in common feeling; and if ever man came of a refined and susceptible race you do. Shall I approach this painful subject?—awaken emotions which, even at this distance of time, I feel myself are overpowering? Shall I refer to your mother, my dear sister, Lucy? You are familiar with her sad story; you must have heard how she died of grief for your father's death—died of a broken heart—if ever mortal did; and Catherine Pelham, whom you would forsake so heartlessly—who unhappily loves you as fondly as ever your mother did your father—is her very image; the very image in feature as in soul, in sweetness of disposition, of your sainted mother—just such another loving, clinging, trusting, sensitive creature. Lincoln! if she should ever learn that you contemplated treachery to her, it would kill

her as certainly as if you did it with a knife. The fragile, delicate girl would sink under your cruelty, as your mother in heaven did, of a broken heart; and you, who are so honourable and sensitive, so true a gentleman by nature, must make up your mind to carry the guilt of Catherine's destruction to your grave.

"Again, but one word more," continued the uncle. "You admit that you have given two women claims upon you. Let me ask, as a disinterested person, as one man to another, are their claims equal? Is it possible for you to balance between them? To which side does duty, truth, honour, judgment, reason, and even solid affection direct you—the girl to whom you have been betrothed, who has from childhood regarded you as her destined husband, whose favour you have courted, and wooed and won, whom you have sworn to wed; or this fine practised madam, trained by her artful mother in every artifice of decoy, the flirt of many men, the toast of every tipsy rout of swelterers, who although in her first youth

is old in worldliness, and has made the campaign of every drawing-room in Europe in search of a conquest, a coronet, a fortune, and a fool to marry her?

"Be quiet, sir, I shall have done in a moment," cried out the Duke, waving his nephew aside. "Do not strut and fume with me. I do not speak lightly or at random. Go to Ranelagh any evening and you may see this famous beauty, together with supper and fireworks, for the price of the ticket. I say these Pomfrets are all leagued in a conspiracy to catch you, and I cannot distinguish between the different parts assigned to each member of the band. What a set of sharpers! Here the drunken son comes, sword in hand, on your French servant, swearing out that you are to marry his sister, and the Countess stops the man's mouth with a bribe—with her own hand she does it—lest the scandal should spread and reach your ears. Eh! can it be that you have not heard?—that you are ignorant of the pleasant scene, which all the waiting maids and footmen in town have been gossiping over for the week?"

Lincoln stared.

"Ask the Frenchman yourself, or send for my man Screw; he will tell you. Oh, Lincoln!—to think that my nephew should be such an idiot! During your whole life I never suffered so much. I did not believe that it was possible for you to cause me so much pain—you, the centre of my hopes and ambition—the prospect of my declining years—the crown of my not uneventful life! Oh, Harry! Harry!" Here a wondrous and moving incident occurred—the "arbiter of England," the friend of royalty and foremost statesman of Europe, the Duke of Newcastle, turned his august head to the wall and wept. Lincoln, thoroughly bewildered, stood by, and the bronze bust of Minerva calmly surveyed the scene.

"Go, Harry! not another word. I am unmanned; I have lost my firmness; you see it has overcome me," and the Duke waved his cambric handkerchief with a repelling motion. "You can return presently. Come to dinner by-and-by; I shall have recovered then: but at present you must leave

me. Go! Go!" Then a succession of spasmodic sobs, in the midst of which the signal bell somehow sounded, and Mr. Screw appeared. "Stop!" as Lincoln was going. "I had forgot—this emotion puts everything out of my head. I am going to Carlton House, and will set you down. Come with me, my nephew, come; I need your support. Look after my buckle, Screw; see that I am all right behind." Already the flow of tears was arrested, in a moment afterwards the Duke's face was bright and serene as he descended the great staircase supported on the arm of his nephew, the lackeys bending their rows of floury heads, and outside on the steps in the rain the footmen trotted to and fro in their gorgeous uniforms as solemn as undertakers.

"Good heavens! St. David's! he has caught me after all," squeezing Lincoln's arm, as a placid face and spectacles emerged from behind the line of attendants, and intercepted the passage; but in an instant the Duke had bounded forward and was shaking the prelate by the hand.

"My good bishop, my right reverend and dear friend, my dear lord, waiting—waiting for me! How is this? Why was I not told that his lordship waited? You Wilmot, Hartley, Harris, how is this?" None of these functionaries answered or appeared.

"My lord Bishop, I am in despair at this accident, and now—now I have not a moment to dispose of—very unfortunate—I am in despair—not a moment to give you, but it is so; we are due at Carlton House, my nephew and I—my nephew Lincoln. Lincoln, my Lord the Bishop of St. David's. Can I do anything for my dear lord? Command me in any service," whispered the Duke emphatically, at the same time throwing his arm over the bishop's shoulder, and hanging on in this endearing way, they proceeded slowly down the steps to the street. His grace's coach was standing yonder; there was a visible stir amongst the smoking rabble at sight of the great man, and much excitement amongst the constables and waiting men, who commenced to belabour the lieges with their staves to widen the ring near the

carriage. "God save the King, the Protestant interest and the Constitution!" bawls out a burly tradesman, inspired by the sight of the great statesman hanging on the neck of a good bishop. "God save Church and State! May they ever be thus united!"

"Thank you, my friend." The Duke removed his hat, stood a moment bobbing his periwig in the drizzle on either hand, then it finally bobbed into the coach. A loud huzzah from the crowd, and the footmen got to their several stations.

Lincoln above, in the porch, stood fingering his hat, gazing moodily at the scene. Perhaps he did not see it with those vacant eyes; perhaps it did not impress him much if he did. Then a voice calling from the interior of the coach interrupted his reverie; he started and raised his eyes. As he crossed the hall a sunbeam streamed in through the stained window, waking up the colours of the ducal shield emblazoned there. The motto underneath the arms was on a level with his eye, and attracted him directly. *Vincit amor pa*—no! the

old chamberlain's bald pate lay just between him and the final word; he did not read *patriæ*—"*Vincit amor*" only: there was a mocking devil in that window then. The words rang distinctly in his ears as he descended the steps—distinctly as if a voice had shouted them. "*Vincit.*" Who had conquered—he or love? or had there been a victory at all? Was it as a victor that he stepped into the carriage and sat beside the wily old buffoon smirking there? The Duke had more the air of a conqueror than he had, for all that a tear lurked in his eyelid; yet he pulled out his pocket-handkerchief and snuff-box, as the carriage got under way, saying, "An old scamp that St. David's, to waylay me thus. Some people will never take a hint, and that humbug won't. I have done all in my power to snub him without effect. A full-bottomed Whig like that, without any influence, to bother me so! These people have no sense of propriety, and never know when they are in the way. A great mistake for a public man having anything to do with the Church; he should try to

keep his hands out of it from the beginning. Useful thing sometimes to find yourself well in the mouth of the clergy, but they always get more than they give, and no getting free of the Church once the connection is made. Besides, they are so quick to get paid, and so exorbitant as to price, once they render a service: they consider the laity made for themselves only—for their own use and profit. Same everywhere all over the world, in all religions—Popery, Establishment, Dissent—no difference. The Church as an institution is well enough, but you can't have a church without parsons, and the sight of a parson always gives me a shiver. These gentry raise such a caterwauling if a man ventures to be independent; you are not a Christian at all if not a slave to them. As if a man can't go to heaven without being a feeding-bottle to these crocodiles, hand and glove with them!—that is their notion of politics and of party, to suck away at everything they can stick to. You see that old brigand St. David's lying in ambush for me. It shows you

what a minister has to go through. We want Henry VIII. over again, Harry! that's my opinion; another Reformation, to put the clergy back to its place. My idea of a parson is the man down at Esher, that one asks to dinner three times in the year, and marries to a housemaid for promotion. But his present Majesty would not do so well for Henry VIII., he is too religious for the character. Ahem! Though otherwise 'twould suit him well enough indeed in many respects. But fancy our Anne Boleyn going to the block. I really should be sorry to witness it, for madame is a very sensible woman, though no beauty, and very considerate to ministers. If she were not the woman she is, and where she is, the affairs of England would be in a tangle, I can tell you: but you are a favourite, you sly rogue; besides, she hates Carteret; while his Majesty, God bless him! is very flighty about Carteret; he thinks so much of him. And I don't deny the man parts; but what is a statesman without discretion or temper? An enthusiast with no control over himself is

never fit to be at the head of affairs—does more harm than good with all his brains. Ah! Here we are at Carlton House. Now get out; I don't care to be seen driving up with a fop like you; 'tis not in character. You can have a chair, and go off on your own account." The Duke signalled one of his running footmen, who hailed a chairman, on the trot as he was. And then taking leave of his nephew, patting him on the cheek, declaring that he would get up his spirits again before Michaelmas, and live to be twice married; and all in one breath bidding him keep his clocked ankles out of the gutter, drove a few hundred yards further on, and pulled up at Carlton House.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH LINCOLN WRITES TWO LETTERS.

"So your old catamaran old Nobs won't let Alphonse's governor marry our young woman after all, Mr. Screw?" says Hawks, Lord Lempster's servant, in the parlour of the 'Royal William,' where, with Captain Keats's man—the same who had kissed the maid at Esher—all three sat over a convivial cup. "Things are gone far for a draw-stakes on your side now; and them two innocents sweet as Cupids on each other, 'twould bring tears into anybody's eyes to see it—anybody with a feelin' bosom; not that the old man has any tenderness in his inside; I don't think so, Mr. Screw; he was wildish in his day, was his grace, most like, seeing he is now so well with the Church—that follows very often."

"We always kep' tip-top society," said Screw; "and the Church, as an institootion, we patronise of course; it belongs to the Constitootion and the British Empire."

"A common thing for them that are going to shove off from this terrestial sphere, as the poet says, Mr. Screw, to square up things with the Church before starting, especially in a case like old Nobs. I don't wonder you 'ave bishops down at Claremont so often; making up to the clergy is like sending a courier on before you into the other world, to have everything right and comfortable 'gainst you arrive. 'Twill take a lot o' bishops, though, to bring off the Duke when he arrives. Awful 'ard for an old tyrant like him to have to put up with an inferior position in society in them 'ere realms of bliss, and he always so particular about airing his cushions, and having everything comfortable. But he is hard, the Duke. A wildish life hardens yer up inside, especially in the case of a rich old sinner. You wasn't ever either of a sentimental natur yourself, Mr. Screw, was yer? Like master

like man—ahem! gentleman. For one who cries so much, his grace has a stony 'art. Lord! how my lady do take on when they talk of the Duke and his tears, and the lace 'andkercher in his 'and always ready to let fire, she 'ates him so, the Duke, do our Countess."

"A very clever woman; I like her; but we aint altogether quite such fools as she thinks, though. She can't gammon us," replies Mr. Screw.

"No! but what you can't get over on our side is our Lempster, my governor; that's my opinion, Mr. Screw," said Hawks. "The weak point in our armour is Lempster, no denying it; for we can't get over him ourselves any more than others," he added with touching candour. "If he were only ordinary bad, no matter; but he is downright, hout and hout. Bless you! he came 'ome from Ranelagh the other night with legs an' harms bared, and a crownd on his head, dressed up like the Grand Turk, and as drunk as Julius Cæsar. He came into our quarters, he did, at two o'clock in the

morning, and set the maids fluttering up through the garrets like swallows, bawling out for liquor, and smashing and banging heverything with a drawnd sword out. 'Tis a mercy he didn't skiver that Frenchman down at our place, or a pity there wasn't more row about it, 'twould have been a lesson, maybe; and, all the same, Alphonse would have been no great loss, if he had run him through; but our Countess, she stopped up the row with that 'ere diamond. Clever woman! Not the only money she has had to pay for Lempster though; and many a diamond will have to go yet if things don't come to a stop; more money than we can afford, I tell yer."

"Tut! Boys will be boys; we don't mind such things at all," exclaimed Screw, waving his hand. "And 'tis not so much Lempster either as other matters; the fam'ly itself, in fact; between ourselves, the fam'ly is the chief difficulty in our way," he added, affably. "Lempster may be bad enough——"

"He is, Mr. Screw," said Hawks.

"But we would not mind if other things was square; but the fam'ly being there, you see, 'twould be just the same if Lempster was an angel, which I admit he is not, nor likely to be; you break down in the fam'ly altogether, Hawks; I'm sorry for it on yer account!"

"We are descended from Edward the Confessor; and he was a king and a saint; and that's fam'ly enough, I suppose, for any purpose: what more do people want?"

"Hedward the Confessor may do very well if he was there, and there are Hedwards and Hedwards. However, I don't want to hurt anybody's feelin's," said Screw, considerately swallowing the beer to which the other was treating him, "or cry out on anybody's fish, when we are not going to buy it; and that we are not this time. Put it out of your mind, my friend; we are not going to have any matrimonial dealings with your house; the 'ead of our firm won't stand it, anyway. I don't like to be particular, but there are difficulties in the way; though I aint proud, I repeat that it

won't do," said Screw, plunging his nose in the frothing measure.

"But he *is* there, is King Edward," persisted Hawks; "I seed him myself at Easton Neston, as you turn into the west gallery, with a crownd on his 'ead, and a queend on either hand; for, though he was a saint, he 'ad two on 'em for queens: whether in harness together, or whether they wos a good match, and kep step like our bays in the curricle, or whether 'twas tandem fashion he drov 'm, one after the other, I never could rightly find out, for Mrs. Rogers, our housekeeper, she says our Countess don't like being cross-hackled on the point of King Edward and them wives."

"And I believe that, hon the 'ole, your Countess DO not like it. Hi, hi! I agree with Mrs. Rogers there," said Screw, with a sardonic laugh.

"And I am hork'rd in my English history myself, having been so much abroad in Paris and furin parts in my youth, with young Rattler, Lord Pauldooley's son, when he kep' race-horses at Versailles. I was a light mount to Rattler, I was.

'Twas as light bob in a racing saddle I first rode into society, though I'm eleven ston' three good, as I sit."

"There's society and society, too, like everything else, my friend," said Screw, chuckling at this innocence. Hawks in society, indeed! "But was old Pauldooley a peer of the realm as well as a Irish peer?" he asks in an evasive patronising way.

"Most like he was, being a viscount!"

"It don't foller at all, my good feller; ah! you 'ave a few things in 'igh life to learn yet."

"Anyway King Edward had two queends. I'm right so far, and sure of it," said Hawks, doggedly, "and for anything I know, two may be the right and reg'lar allowance for a saint. I knew a saint once myself; he were a Methodist minister at Mrs. Wadman's chapel, in Wingfield Cut; he was sweet on the widow was he; and the deuce after all the wimming that were going up to heaven by his ladder. Wimming and muffins, they were his passion. Two wives would have been only fair allowance for that 'ere saint, though I know many

a sinner that one is too many for. However, Edward the Confessor is there, for certain, and whenever any visitor to the house asks questions about our family, the Countess, she walks him upstairs and shows him the pictur herself—no doubt about King Edward!"

"I'm glad to hear it," says Mr. Screw.

"No, he is little better than a rake and a nicker, and consorts with the worst fellers about the town."

"What! King Edward?"

"No, Lempster, and he *is* the real difficulty in our way; and 'twould be a match but for him. And I can't so much blame the Duke after all. 'Twould take a good many saints and confessors to balance Lempster; he'd kick the beam though the Pope and Archbishop of Canterbury were both at the other side, he would."

"See here now, you 'ad trade in the fam'ly once; and to be plain, that's a thing we can't ever git over, my good feller, once for all," said Screw, setting down the tankard; "especially on account of the dukedom, and being so thick with the

King and the rest on 'em. I don't say she aint a fine young 'ooman herself, but there are other things which people like us must consider. We belong to the country, you understand; we are English history, in fact, and can't marry up and down like Tom or Dick, Hans or Kuntz (as they had it in Hanover last year), like the common nobility, people whose names are not in the royal studbook, the Almanack; as Herr Steinmetz, our courier, who is himself a German baron, says, 'When a fam'ly has history behind, and posterity before, it must look at things all round.' You would understand that better, Hawks, if you had mixed more in the Court set, which you are not likely to do in your present situation; but the Countess, she should have knowed so much; she has been in the world. However, her mistake was in looking too 'igh above her 'ead. I don't say but she would have done pretty well with them girls if it wasn't for looking too 'igh. A suff'ntly showy dressy-like lot, and do well in a room; not quite my style; but no matter, as I say, would

'ave done well with them if she had not travelled out of her sphere. And that's the whole of it in a word; wouldn't keep to her proper place.—Middling good beer here for a common public; I think I may venture on another measure. Ring the bell.—Ah, Alphonse! welcome, Alphonse!" cried out Mr. Screw, as Lord Lincoln's servant appeared in the doorway. "*Comment vous portey voo, mong ami*; delighted to see you looking so well. Drawer, another measure for Monsieur Alphonse." But the Frenchman drew himself erect, and thrusting a hand into his breast, glared indignantly at the speaker.

"Eh! sit down and share our beer. Don't stand strutting like a cockatoo, man," continues Screw in high good-humour; "for this concerns yourself. Here is Hawks taking on about your friend Lempster, the Milord Mohawk, of small-sword practice—you know—and I say that milord aint at all so bad except when he is a little *come çà*, you understand, Alphonse," added Mr. Screw, with a guffaw, making a drinking motion of

the wrist. "But when something comes out of it, what matter? Not every gentleman in our profession gets diamond pins from ladies of quality so easy; but everybody aint like some people either—havn't the same way with the wimming—the *jenney say quaw*." Some runs after them, and some they runs after—*pas toot à fay même chose*. Lucky fellow! but you always understood the *bow* sex, like every *parley voo*;" and cheerfully Mr. Screw winked a condescending wink round the general company, to convey that he was enjoying himself at the foreigner's expense.

"But, Mr. Skriou, you 'ave betray my confidence. I refuse to trink wid you," screams out Alphonse, pushing away the refreshment brought him. "C'est fort mal honnête, un lâcheté, monsieur. I 'ave all lost, because of you, mon honneur, mon bonheur, même mon épingle. Yes, my poor diamont goes too with the rest of the shipwreck. Hélas! and you call yourself my friend. I open my 'art to you and you betray de secret. I don't hold to such friend."

"I never did. It never passed my lips, 'pon my honour," said Screw, lying with a face of brass.

"Everybody knows about that secret of yours; so hold your tongue, *taysey fou*, Alphonse, and don't make a fool of yourself; 'tis the town's talk; there is no mystery about it now," said Hawks, coming to the rescue of his patron, the great man's great man.

"But monsieur le Duc told milord that he had it from you, traître que vous êtes," persists Alphonse. "And milord was like an enragé. Moreover, he insisted on my returning the pin on the spot, mon pauvre diamant qui était cependant bien à moi, et puis voilà. So no wonder that I am much obliged to you, Mr. Skriou, my FRIEND! Mon Dieu, quel FRIEND!"

"What! return the pin? you were not such a flat as that?"

"Mais oui, oui, de pin—my pin. I 'ave even parted with it already, although it pierced my 'art—the pin is gone. Judge then, monsieur, of the love I bear you—de gratitude—when it was all because of you."

"You never could hold a secret, Alphonse; 'twas your own fault, you were always a leaky vessel," said Hawks. "But all the same you should have been able to hold that pin once you got it in your fingers."

"Yes; you always kep a loose tongue in your 'ead. Let this be a warning to you, you chattering little beggar," said the lofty Screw, flouncing out of the taproom with a deeply offended air, followed in a moment by the faithful Hawks. The barmaid Esther smiled as they passed out. Screw said she was a pretty child, and chucked her chin in an offhand playful way most becoming in a menial of his consequence and condition, while Alphonse stood scowling from the interior, grinding his yellow teeth.

Screw paused a moment on the threshold, then turned, and with a scornful wave of the hand repeated aloud the popular lines—

> "In Paris there's a race of animals;
> I've seen them in their operas and balls—"

(He pronounced the words *hanimals* and *hopperers*;

for Screw was not himself when roused, and passion brought out the native Wapping on his tongue.)

> "They stand erect, they dance whene'er they walk;
> Monkeys in action, paroquets in talk."

And snapping his fingers as he launched this sarcastic quotation into the Frenchman's face, he accepted the arm of the officious Hawks, and glided off languidly, twirling his cane with the air of a prince.

"Better send him a challenge, like a man. I'll bear the message for you. It can be with pistols as you don't like swords, you know," laughed out Captain Keats's gentleman mockingly. "If it gets out in the ville de Paree that you did not call him out for this, you'll be cut in society when you return home. Come, sit down, my bully, and stand a beer. I'll fight him for yer for a crown if you're afeard yourself."

But the affair did not end there, as the valet Alphonse had to attend his master Lincoln that very evening at the Duke's, and so came again in contact with his false friend. Alphonse was

heated with wine when the interview was renewed, and Screw, not brave by nature, made but a poor figure when, without appreciative friends to back him up, he stood face to face with the angry Gaul. The women all sided with the brave Alphonse, and admired the incoherent vehemence of his language and fine impassioned air; and Screw, for all his clocked stockings and shoulder-knots, was regarded as a monster of treachery by the sympathetic females of the servants' hall.

But an event occurred upstairs on this evening which extinguished all hostility amongst the rival menials in that noble mansion. The Duke had received his nephew to a *tête à tête* dinner. He seemed in revived health and spirits.

Sir Thomas Robinson was present, and the Duke rallied him gaily on his dancing propensities and juvenile ways. Sir Thomas was a dull, large man, in a round waistcoat, and quite as heavy as he looked. He was one of his grace's toadies, and did not always perceive the point of the joke that was cut at him—a great advantage in a toady, in a

public man and party leader, for Sir Thomas became both. When the Duke attained to office he set up Sir Thomas against Messrs. Pitt and Fox. He was to lead the House of Commons. These two being then allies, working in concert, and in opposition. What a position for a dull man! What quiverfuls of satire these two crack shots must have fired away into that defenceless white waistcoat! What an easy mark for them to hit! How did poor Sir Thomas endure it. Why didn't he get up and run away before he was crushed or quenched by their combined artillery.

However, on this evening he left early to attend a masquerade, and the Duke accompanied him across the room, shook hands in excellent spirits, made an appointment with him for the next day, then returned to his place, and, without any further notice, fainted off in his chair.

Imagine the shock to Lord Lincoln. The confidential attendants of the house took it more easily, for his grace had a way of falling ill without

giving warning, and of recovering from the attack quite as suddenly, especially on the eve of projected journeys to Hanover. However, Dr. Lytton appeared, and after seeing the patient, who had happily recovered his senses, spoke to Lincoln apart, and inquired if he had knowledge of any exciting cause which would explain a cerebral disturbance, as in his opinion the accident had arisen from severe mental distress. Lincoln was overwhelmed with remorse. It was clear that the responsibility of the accident lay at his door; the shock of the marriage disclosure had been more than the old man could support. Remember the impulsive disposition of the nephew. He stood by the bedside of his uncle and wept; perhaps the first genuine tears which had ever moistened the ducal pillow. What if he should break the old man's heart, in addition to the other hearts which apparently must be broken by his feebleness or faithlessness? How strange! Every person whom he loved, or who loved him, was to suffer for it in some way or other.

The sensation of present remorse was very keen

at the moment, and hanging over his prostrate uncle, Lincoln generously vowed to make any sacrifice for his restoration. He probably expressed himself in some incoherent way to this effect, for the Duke immediately began to give certain signs of amendment. He opened his eyes wide, and those eyes filled readily with sympathetic tears as, in the enthusiasm of an exalted sensibility, Lincoln poured out a flood of dutiful and affectionate protestation. This had a visible effect on the health of the Duke; he slept better on that very night, and the next day had largely recovered his spirits. It was Lincoln who had restored him to health, he said; the sympathy of his nephew had done more for him than the drugs of Dr. Lytton.

Naturally, this good understanding led to mutual confidences. The Duke opened his mind freely—that mind pregnant with statecraft and supreme ambitions. A corner of the curtain of politics—personal politics—was raised, and the inner mysteries of intrigue revealed; also the last royal whisper at

Hanover was dropped into Lincoln's bewildered ear—who Walmoden was like to side with—and, deadly secret! what trusty agent had been secretly chartered to traffic with the Countess. "Egad, Harry, they might have done worse than select you for the job. Now I remember it," said the Duke; "you have already made your way with her ladyship, and in any personal negotiations we could not have a more likely ambassador: you have commenced prettily for a novice."

Then, a broader operation was on foot, a parliamentary crisis which was to result in the triumph and glory of the house of Pelham. Newcastle exhibited the outlines of the plot. "If the coup succeeded, not only is Henry, your father-in-law" (the Duke was particular), "to be first minister, but the working majority relied on in Parliament is such as no minister ever brought into office. The auspices of our house were never so promising, and all this is for you—for you only," added the uncle. "We are toiling to construct the hive and the honey; you will only have to live and enjoy it. You are

the converging point of our united ambition; the end of this combination. It is the dream of old age to construct a happy position for its successors. Do not envy us this enjoyment, Harry; do not intervene to obstruct our labour—labour of love as it is. We are laying the foundations of your house; building the walls of solid masonry. Leave to a doting old man the only solace of his life."

It was not in Lincoln's woman's nature to resist pressure in this form; besides, his imagination might unconsciously have been dazzled by the picture which the Duke spread before his eyes. Beautiful and admirable as Lady Sophia was, there were undoubtedly drawbacks to the alliance. Lady Pomfret, for instance, was not at all to his taste, and a more desirable brother-in-law than Lempster might easily be imagined; the loss of the dukedom and its accessories was also worth considering, and—Catherine Pelham. Briefly, the cold prudence of the Duke began to have its effect; and Lincoln was coming round to believe that even perfect happiness might be purchased at too

24272

high a figure; already he doubted whether to pay more than a market price for the article.

To be sure, there was much interior shivering and shaking; he suffered horribly before bringing himself quite round to such a business-like change of sentiments—sufferings which were apparent in the pallor of his cheek, and a certain degree of carelessness in his dress. But he had acquired the faculty of enduring interior pain with much patience. It did not compel him to alter his course, so he continued calmly sailing on until Agony Point was fairly weathered at last: he had fevers and spasms, but in the end yielded so far to the inevitable, and accepted the cruel, but prudent suggestions of his Mentor, that after some labour two letters were written out in a fair hand and despatched into Northamptonshire. The first of these was his own composition, and breathed some yet tepid blasts from that slaked-down furnace of passion which the eager Duke was rapidly raking away into ashes. He sealed the note with lilac wax, and stamped it with a certain private

seal: two hands fast locked, surrounded with the legend—*Trust me ever.* But the second letter was a joint composition; rather, was written directly from the dictation of the Duke, and breathed a share of his haughty spirit. His grace inclosed it under cover from himself, and with his own hand wrote the address of the Countess of Pomfret, stamping the missive with his state signet.

The old man had pleasant dreams that night when this despatch was fairly on its way; he rose next morning altogether restored, but he did not yet attend to business or receive visitors. Dr. Lytton was instructed to issue bulletins announcing his gradual and steady recovery without jumping him into rude health all at once, and the tide of carriages and anxious inquirers for his grace continued to flow through Duke Street as briskly as ever.

"This attack will get me off the Hanover trip again; one good result of it, at all events," said the Duke. "It is out of the question that a man in my state could travel this season. Sir Robert,

Carteret, Fox, and the rest of them will be wrong once more," he added gleefully. "Half these people coming here every day with long faces asking after my health are spies in their pay, clerics as well as others. They are all wrong again; and now they give out that I am dying, they will be wrong there also."

As it happened, round sums were laid at White's on that event. Walpole maintained that his grace had been scheming from the beginning, and applauded his own sagacity in predicting that there would be no journey to Hanover, though he was far from guessing the causes both of the delay and of the illness of his grace. But if he did not discover the cause he perceived the effect of it readily enough, and no doubt settled down with a grim pleasure in the bow window at Strawberry Hill to compose his Florentine letter. Was there any mixture of hope underlying his satisfaction then? Perhaps he nurtured a project of profiting from the mishap by ricochet. The first of a quarrel is often an opportunity for otherwise hopeless lovers,

and if Lady Sophia should faint at the shock of this desertion, were not Walpole's arms the nearest at hand for her to fall into? Here she was running the gauntlet from disappointment to disappointment. Was there a fate in it, a future for himself?—who could tell? He certainly loses no time in despatching the important news to his friend Sir Horace in Italy.

It contained a double disaster to the house of Pomfret, and a possible chance for himself, no wonder he was content.

"Lord Lincoln and Mr. Pitt have declared off in form; so much for my lady's schemes," he writes. "Poor Lady Sophia is at the gasp of all her hopes; everything is finally arranged for Lord Lincoln's marriage with his cousin Miss Pelham, but the marriage is not to take place until the winter. He is to get everything that the Duke and Mr. Pelham can give or settle—it is great joy to the house of Pelham."

And to the house of Strawberry Hill also, we may be sure.

CHAPTER V.

A RESTLESS INTERVAL.

And so the danger to his nephew passed; but, thankful for the escape, and fairly alarmed this time, the Duke resolved that Lincoln should run no more risks if he could prevent it. It was too soon to send him down to Esher yet; and as the Pomfrets might appear any moment in town, the Duke manœuvred, as before, to place Lincoln out of danger. A yachting cruise was therefore arranged, with the grouse season to follow, and some necessary visits to several great northern families contrived to fill up the time till autumn.

He was not afraid to trust his precious nephew to Scotland, notwithstanding the great Scotch alarm of those days. The crafty old Duke was more afraid of the Countess than of the Pretender.

Yet in London the Scotch fever was spreading fast; almost as fast as the earthquake fever which immediately followed it. On the French coast troops were being massed for invasion. We can understand what that meant. A few years ago there was no crowding of invading troops at hostile ports, only a little invading talk, windy enough in its way, and it drove us out of our wits—turned us into British Volunteers. But a century ago the assembly was beating through the land, subscription lists were opened in every town, and every petty place intriguer had an easy way of showing his loyalty, and pushing his fortunes, by plumping down his name and his guinea. It was popular, and it paid—times are not so much changed after all.

There were alarms from Ireland also—Ireland, which we were holding down with one strong hand, and from America, which occupied another strong hand. That hand is idle now; the American, not the Irish one: we only use it for peace purposes, for shaking hands with, or for making a "hand over" sometimes—but no longer for fighting or bullying.

However, two thousand men were brought with all speed from Ireland to fight the Pretender, so great was the emergency and our fear of the Scots. King George ferried over his Hanoverians, and huffed our generals by the preference shown to foreign commanders. It was a famous time for foreigners in England; battalions of valiant Dutch land at Gravesend, and—oh, patriotic flunkeys!—the Swiss servants in London offer to form themselves into a regiment to fight the stalwart Highlanders. Six hundred of them were actually enrolled, clothed, and armed. Fancy the yellow plush ranks going out to engage a line of ragged bare-legged caterans in kilts! What a contrast in the coup d'œil!

But it was fashionable to be frightened, and to subscribe—people proved their loyalty in that way. They came to Lord Carteret for a subscription; he laughed in their faces and refused: he scoffed at the rising and the panic, ridiculed the new levies, the Dutch officers, the dragoons who galloped away at Preston Pans; he sneered even

at the great Duke, who was everybody's hero; for there was a great Duke of the period also—another one, not Newcastle, who got 25,000*l.* a year for ever for snuffing out that rebellion. Even Walpole caught the fever; his letters are so full of panic and concern for his own belongings that his prudent friend Mann begins to tremble for his post; there were no telegraphs then, and our Florentine envoy must have been very eager for news. Walpole is bloodthirsty in his fright, or in his love for the Georgian dynasty; he becomes wild because one poor Scotch gentleman is suffered to escape the block, and make his way to France.

If there was a rising at present, how many Scotch gentlemen would risk their necks for that cause, for any cause, or principle? Scotch lives have become more valuable than they were long ago, but where are Scotch gentlemen gone to nowadays? Undoubtedly there were some in the Pretender's time—a whole line of them—Balmerino, that royal old scamp Lovat, Tulliebardine,

young Cromartie, Kilmarnock and the rest. How hard it is for us to realize that these reckless and devoted nobles were Scotchmen! Perhaps that luckless rebellion annihilated the species, possibly all the Scotch gentlemen were massacred at Culloden, or beheaded one by one afterwards.

But how famously the Scotch have turned the tables on us since. We don't behead them any more; they have been beating us back ever since Culloden. If they did not impose their sovereign on us then, have they not since stolen ours away? They have conquered us more completely than with the claymore; they have conquered even our antipathies; for we love Scotland now almost as much as we did Hanover then? If old Newcastle were now alive, he would not be so much astray in thinking that Hanover was in Scotland, as Walpole said he did. Time has rectified that blunder in the Duke's geography. Hanover is in Scotland at present?—where are the ghosts of the Stewarts? We have Scotch hospitality in the highlands, Scotch parsimony in the Exchequer,

Scotch sympathies in the Cabinet, and Scotch kilts on the royal princes; and—supreme compliment!—a Scotch reel danced by three kilted royals before our famous new ally from Persia.

What an imposing spectacle, the three royal boys capering to the singing bagpipes before that bedizened savage! How his diamonds must have twinkled—winked knowingly at each other, every diamond laughing in his sleeve!

Is there a Walpolè looking on now, to transmit the history of the affair? There was a fashionable savage prince in his day also. There were many since—it is a fashionable pastime with Londoners of every time. Some time ago there was a famous one, whom we not only lionised, but even civilised. He took to our ways; at least we thought he did. We made a Christian of him, a British Christian; that is, we got him into Bond Street clothes—Poole's perhaps. We set him on a park hack; our wives and daughters made eyes at him; we fed him on French dishes—happy, copper-coloured prince that he was. Well, he went back to his

own dominions, filled with love and admiration for ourselves, our champagne and our ways, and we, in our natural English way, rejoiced self-righteously in the promising convert we had made. But what happened? What is the fact? This heathen had no sooner turned his ungrateful back on us, than he stripped his English coat from off it; he left his Christianity, too, with the cast-off clothes; he went about in a blanket and a bow and arrow for ever after; he declared French cookery poor stuff, and relapsed to the simpler fare of his royal ancestors—he even cooked more *natives* than ever. Ha! the roast beef of old Fiji; none of your foreign kickshaws for him: he was a plain country gentleman, and laughed at our outlandish fare.

Suppose the last heathen royalty were to play us such another trick—that the Shah, too, were to turn out a sham—such a black prince as the one we refer to, and play at diamond cut diamond with us—and he has such a lot of them, we should be overmatched in the game by force of capital

—and that after all the feasting and fiddling, the compliments, the crackers we let off, the royal reels we danced, the prize-fighters and the other superfine diversions which we provided for him, he should relapse into Russianism, like the treacherous, underbred, ungrateful barbarian he would in such case become—what then? Do you suppose we should profit by the lesson, and not remain the cockneys that we are, and be ready as ever to begin over again before any heathen in tattoo, which fashion or diplomacy should invite us to stare at to-morrow?

However, there was no danger of the Pomfrets appearing in town, and Lord Lincoln might have remained under the tutelage of his uncle, for any risk he ran in that way.

Lady Pomfret did not quit Easton Neston for the summer—the blow crushed her.

Fortunately, she intercepted the postman on the morning when the fatal package bearing the Newcastle shield and crest was delivered at

Easton Neston. She knew the arms, she guessed the hand; she was well-informed of the contents before bursting the wax.

One must have cast a fatal throw, or played the last trump, or seen one's only coin roll away under the croupier's rake, to appreciate the look which lay in the eyes of the Countess as she carried away the packet with the great ceremonial seal—a bad despair, an unresigned collapse, bankruptcy not of fortune only, but of energy and hope. First, there was the silent flight to her own chamber, to take the full withering swoop of the shock alone—alone. The supreme importance of concealment was instinctively the first idea prominent to her mind. Compassion for her daughter, caution, every consideration urged her to undergo the first of the ordeal without assistance. She had the ship still to command, whatever her feelings were. Some visitors remained yet, these were to be considered. If she wept in secret, the tears should leave no channels in her cheeks for friends to peer at. She was smiling,

good-humoured, more officious to her guests than ever—over-officious. For the second time her matchless daughter had beed jilted by this detestable earl, but the world should not hear of it then; although the world must find it out in its own time she knew. She was dying hard, fighting to the last. The fox was gnawing away at the vitals of this Spartan lady, but she did not blench or waver, but did her duty valiantly. Vulgar, pretentious, ridiculous, she might be in prosperity —a caricature—but in adversity prompt to act, fertile in resources, long-suffering, self-reliant, courageous.

At first Lady Sophia was confined to her chamber under plea of indisposition, but afterwards these two miserable women indulged their sorrow in solitude. There is no record of how the daughter bore up under the stroke, but her mother's better nature intervened, and she abstained from her habit of officious interference. "The child must be let alone, to feel and fret over it in her own way;" it would take time and

quietude; and so the days flew by. Summer, autumn, passed; mid-winter approached, and still the Pomfrets were at Easton Neston.

The Countess was perhaps unwilling to face the gaze of the town after this second failure. It was said that Lady Sophia was in a decline, and pining to her grave; moreover, that the Pomfrets were ruined root and branch; the family acres scraped to the bare stones, for the expenditure of the Italian campaign, and Lord Lempster bent on making an end of what remained of them. This enterprise was, in fact, a last chance, and now it had failed the intriguing Countess must pass the remainder of her days doing penance down in Northamptonshire. This was the world's criticism. Some pious friends saw a judgment for her worldliness, and hoped it would do her good; and at a select and lively supper-party at Lady Townshend's the subject came up for discussion. At this period Lady Townshend thought proper to increase both the liveliness and frequency of her supper-parties. Time was trailing up close

in an unmannerly way, and the marchioness was not yet done with being young and beautiful. As a rule, people on the uttermost verge of departing youth rarely do tire of it; elderly persons who refuse to step over that last boundary line never; it is only the young who are weary of being so. Therefore the cracks and flaws that dissipation and pleasure had dug in her beauty she patched up as best might be, but the scars remained still, and the decaying process proceeded in spite of the mending. What then! She became all the younger for it. Time was moving on, and the evil hour coming, when even paint would no longer charm. It was a reason for cramming more flirtation and folly into the remaining space; to diminish the percentage of unemployed opportunities; to contrive, say, that six masquerades should stand in the room of four; to attach another adorer or so to the strength of her escort. Lady Townshend had a full endowment of that marvellous gift of thoughtlessness without which the business of gaiety must come

to a premature stop. Already she began to yawn into the pert faces of her powdered cavaliers, to blink drowsily at the glare of that junketing world of which she was one of the priestesses. This in the unconscious, helpless way in which children's eyelids close while protesting that they are not sleepy, and would rather stop up a while longer. Her ladyship did not want to go to bed from Vanity Fair, but sleep was palpably gaining on her nevertheless. A wit, and still a beauty; surrounded by wits and fops. She received her court in the morning at her toilet like a French *marquise*, and they remained on duty until curl-paper time, far on into the other morning. She passed half the night galloping over the town from one festival or amusement to the other, shaking in the hideous springless seat of the rickety gorgeous coaches of the time; footmen and link-boys, and the chairs of her adorers, scampering after; but ennui had nimbler legs than running footmen or horses, and Lady Ethelreda had pouting sullen moments, when her brows

wrinkled under varnish and pearl-powder, and the aides actually on service had an unpleasant and difficult office to perform, a capricious mistress to serve.

On the occasion referred to above a perfumed fop was inspired to distract her ladyship by quoting the lines from Mr. Pope to the address of Lady Sophia Fermor:

> "She went to plain work, and to purling brooks,
> Old-fashioned halls, dull aunts, and croaking rooks:
> She went from opera, park, assembly, play,
> To morning walks, and prayers three times a-day."

"In mercy, stop! change the dreary subject!" said Lady Ethelreda, balancing her plump little person on the cushion of a *péché-mortel.* "It fidgets me to think of any poor woman having to live with cows and horses, and country squires and their wives. O! their wives! Away from brag, and Methodism, and life, in that horrid family den. It serves the Countess right, however; if in mind to be spiteful, it would give me pleasure to think of her mewed up there; however, the Pretender will

arrive at Towcester and eat her up if she remains there."

But the *pretender* has been at Easton Neston," said Mr. Winnington. "He advanced very bravely up to that point, then lost his heart and ran away, leaving plenty of tears behind him."

"And his baggage besides," said witty Lady Ethelreda.

"And his abandoned baggage," repeated Winnington. "He has now returned to Scotland again, making a great victory for the commander-in-chief the Duke—the great Duke."

"He had already lost his heart before coming to Easton Neston," said Lady Townshend.

"But it was from the Duke he ran."

"The '*malade imaginaire*.' Now that his grace has escaped Hanover, and rescued the pretty nephew, he will probably return to his usual health again."

"He is unfortunately there already," said Winnington; "I went to his levée to see, and am convinced that he has not only returned to

health, but is very like to return to office, which is more serious for some of us."

"Politics again!" Lady Townshend yawned. "It is very tiresome you should turn statesman too. Here, Bijou! Do fetch Shock from under the stool. My poodle is afraid, with your great talk about dukes and drums and pretenders. Heigh-ho! when shall we have another drawing-room?" She fondled the mongrel amid the laces and silks of her bodice, kissing its long ears, and grimacing over her fan at a young spark, who turned a spy-glass of affected envy at the situation of the poodle. "We are all growing as dull and sleepy as if we belonged to the royal family. What a blessing if the Prussians, or French, would turn round and burn Herrenhausen to the ground! Shall we ever have another drawing-room, Mr. Winnington? Now that you are a statesman you should be able to answer that, if it's not a party confidence."

"Never another! How is it possible without French clothes? and how procure them with the fleet assembling at Brest?"

"More politics! Now I am fairly to sleep. I shall go hear Lady Bel Finch's handsome preacher in Wimpole Street, if you don't manage to amuse me between you all. Ah! here is somebody else—a godsend!"

Enter Lord Mountstewart, fresh from Ranelagh: he comes up to perform his bow to her ladyship.

"A godsend indeed. Tell us something to keep our eyes open. Had we a miss in not going to the gardens? Sir Charles here wanted me to go, and Mr. Winnington, the sober man, urged me to stay; he is turning wiseacre. Which of them gave proper advice? Was there dancing? was there company? were you bored? Did you see anybody worth while? did you mince chickens?"

Lord Mounstewart patted the dog in its nest of laces; Lady Townshend smirked archly at the freedom; Bijou snarled; then my lord lay full length on a settee beside the *péché-mortel* with its tempting fruit, put up his glass at the general company, took out his snuff-box and

tapped it smiling : a lounging figure, with angular legs, a ci-devant youth of fashion, with dimples and patches, and a peach-blossom bloom on his cheek.

"I have been to the gardens and seen nobody ; a wretched night ; not four hundred people. Not a soul there but the Pomfrets."

Lady Townshend woke up with a bounce, upsetting Shock into the fire-irons.

"The Countess herself, Lady Charlotte, and her Royal Highness Lady Sophia in a French Swiss hat, beautiful as an angel in china—an angel or a marchioness,"—bowing gallantly—"looking hard into everybody's eyes too. She blinded me with her beauty and her air ; I protest, more of a miracle than ever. But I was lucky, for I saw more ; I am, in fact, as full of news as a despatch-box, and it is quite as important as any that comes in any box from Hanover, and more interesting. Dropping into White's, I shook hands with whom?—my Lord Lincoln, fresh home from Scotland."

"The Pretender!" screamed Lady Townshend and Mr. Winnington together. "Call out the Guards—the Pretender in London!"

"But he will be in Paris to-morrow," added Mountstewart, "he but passes through. The Duke says he wants more change of air, and he is of the same opinion himself; especially since the other arrival in town: he told me he was going on."

And this news was true. In the midst of the tattle of society the Countess suddenly returned to town, and in renewed splendour. She appeared in the park with Lady Sophia beside her on the cushion of her coach, looking, or trying to look, as blooming and imperious as when, at Sir Thomas Robinson's ball, she outshone all the beauties of the Court. There was a certain defiance in the mother's air perhaps, a determined face presented to the criticism of her friends; but certainly no shrinking from the public gaze; for she reassumed her position in the world forthwith, and from this period all entertainments which fashion approved were attended by the Countess, accom-

panied often by Lady Charlotte or Lady Henrietta, but always by Lady Sophia; for she had also appearances to maintain, and a principal part to perform. It was necessary to show how slightly her heart had been affected by past events, that her love of society and the world was quite unimpaired by them, that she still dreamt of pleasure and ambition; and to what fate these dreams guided her shall presently appear. It was also true that Lord Lincoln, on his return from Scotland, had quitted town at once for Paris, to the great satisfaction at least of his valet Alphonse.

It required no pressure from the Duke to induce him to keep out of harm's way; he was himself unwilling to appear in clubs and drawing-rooms, a mark for every eye. His position was not at the moment a becoming one, he admitted that; he repeated over the arguments and moral exhortations of the Duke, in vain; he could not obtain a merciful verdict from his conscience; even in the mirror of his own self-esteem, he could not admire the image which he saw reflected there. Humilia-

ting as the conviction was, he perceived that though always acting from the best motives, yet each important action of his life had hitherto been a failure, and that chiefly on his own account, because of some inherent vanity, or selfishness, or feebleness, which always came up at the critical point and spoilt everything.

Even at this moment he could not feel at rest, although doing his duty penitentially; for as he had first sinned by pledging his word with undue precipitancy, reparation now lay in breaking it with due deliberation? and he was doing that, though it was breaking his heart—he thought it was—as if he had a heart to break.

Lincoln had a bias towards self-righteousness, and like all persons of that disposition, craved for the peculiar inward sensation which moralists designate the reward of virtue; but consolation in every form turned spitefully away from him. It was of no avail that he sought distraction in the pleasures of his age; these pursuits had no longer any interest. He had found weariness in the slaughter of grouse,

the yachting cruise was a failure, and the idea of the fripperies and gaieties of Paris was revolting. He was out of tune for such things, or had outgrown the taste for them. He turned away from present realities to look behind again at that other destiny which might have been his if he had pleased, and, as it happened, peculiar circumstances favoured this tendency to reflection and retrospection; even in the very refuge which he had sought the image of Lady Sophia haunted him, for the reputation of her beauty had preceded him to Paris. The list of her conquests was told over again there —how she had refused Lord Holderness and Mr. Dashwood, and that young Horace Walpole, fastidious and hypercritical, man of letters and of taste as he was, had accorded her the benefit of his approval and esteem. One lady of fashion was even so little instructed in the *carte du pays* as to venture to compliment Lincoln directly on his reputed good fortune; and as the gossip of the affair circulated, many polite people committed the same perverse mistake, and came forward to offer compliments,

both on his prospects and his good taste. This was provoking to one who felt that his conduct had not been that of a true knight pledged to his lady fair, but rather of a sordid curmudgeon, who had broken faith and word and troth, and all for gold and greed.

And what had he gained by this unholy barter of happiness? This was the perverse way in which he began to question himself. Was he not already wealthy, honoured, envied enough to content every reasonable desire? Even if the dukedom itself were lost, would not something yet remain to live for? Suppose these famous strawberry leaves binding another brow, and the fat inheritance of the Pelhams—lands, manors, and chattels—were also to pass from him—what then? There might be another prize in life beyond any coronet or fortune.

In this way the influence of the Duke's morality was beginning to wear away, and by the time fixed for returning to England, Lincoln had very skilfully fretted himself round to a chronic state of

discontent again. However, his duties at Court imperatively demanded his attendance, and he knew that on touching English soil a visit to Esher would also be expected. One prospect was as distasteful as the other. He was shy of society. As for Esher, he was in the worst of all moods for playing at tender interviews with his cousin Catherine.

In this temper he reached town, but, still a prey to self-made misery, he avoided every customary haunt; he stole alone into the upper tier of the opera-house; he had horses and rode away to Turnham Green; put up at the inn there, and mooned away two nights and a miserable day, spelling over the windy Gazettes and Chronicles —and dismal reading it was. How did people ever get through the breakfast and after-dinner hours with such resources as the light literature of that time afforded? How was it ever consumed or digested? No wonder our forefathers preferred claret, which was cheap and excellent. So Lincoln came back to town again, and secretly visited

quarters unknown to people of fashion—places of vulgar amusement—meanwhile the Duke had sent for him, but he made excuses and kept away.

From the windows of hackney-coaches, from behind the curtains of his chair, he spied into the windows of familiar clubs, and from one of these was one day so unlucky as to fix the notice of his friend Keats, who was in high excitement, having just returned from Newgate after viewing the bodies of three women who had been stifled in a police station by some drunken constables. Two of the constables had been arrested, were to be tried at once, and would probably be executed next week. Selwyn was already organizing a party of pleasure to go to see them hanged, and he, Keats, had been promised a place in his window.

Lincoln found it difficult to get rid of his loquacious friend, and in the end it was agreed that they should meet and dine together in a certain quiet club, and afterwards go to the opera. Which project was duly accomplished; that is,

the dinner part of it was, not the remainder; for after dinner the two friends sat over their wine, and slipped unconsciously away into a strain of mutual confidence. Keats was the livelier and much pleasanter companion of the two, and his manner had a certain fascination for the dreary Lincoln. Presently they had coffee upstairs in a vacant card-room to escape interruption, and have a talk out by themselves. Yet the club was abandoned on this occasion, the tables deserted, the lights were dim, the lobbies silent; for that night in Parliament my Lord Carteret was firing away into the hostile ranks with his accustomed vigour, and a smashing debate was to follow. There was a state ball at Carlton House, a masquerade at Lady Bel Finch's, and everybody was absent on business or pleasure.

"You are too well off, Lincoln; too miserably well off; that is what ails you," said Keats philosophically, alluding to the languor and desolation which the young earl carried in his face. "Nothing ails you but an over-dose of good fortune. If you

were ever miserable at all, 'tis only in a paltry way. You have not earned that wounded air by any means; 'tis an affectation of you to carry that melancholy in your face. Look at me, your junior by years, yet with baldness already growing on the crown of my head—a spot the size of a double guinea. What does that prove at my age, with Time carrying off your scalp already? It shows things are going really hard with a man, and they are with me. Everything is ill and wrong, and hard with me; still my spirits survive it somehow. The girl I adore snubs me; I admire her all the more; and she admires somebody else. I have debts; and I have my relatives in arms—my family. I detest it—my family. Withal I would scarcely exchange into your shoes, for you don't understand what downright misery means. One of the strongest sensations in life, that you can never taste. No tailor duns you. You are a poor devil of a millionaire—nothing more. You have no pompous, close-fisted elder brother, or curmudgeon uncle, who squeezes down your allowance, and

sends you moral letters suggesting marching regiments and India, instead of a draught on the regimental agents.

"Fortune, the jade, has laid you out a couch of roses; while at me she is ever letting out with every one of her four infernal hoofs. Look! I am weary of the contest. I shall give it up, Lincoln. I shall retire from the business of being a young man any longer. Give up soldiering too—exchange into the line! as my beggarly Crœsus of an uncle suggests, or exchange into the Church! and I am as like to do one as the other."

"Or you might retire altogether," said Lincoln in an absent tone.

"Yes, I think of retiring to Norfolk on a farm, have a large family of children, a seat on the county bench, and a country figure. There's a prospect of misery for you, if you want one," he added, pinching his slim waist. "Or else get into Parliament, and aim at cutting another sort of figure there. Fellows as ignorant and stupid have done that; and it don't take so much to do it. Look at Bambino!"

"But his father is a Duke," said Lincoln.

"If his father were a king, he could not be a greater fool," said Keats. "However, you know Sutton, he is a lord like you, and as fond besides of giving gratis advice as any of your set are. I owe money to Sutton, and have to absorb his advice gratis. Well, his wisdom has suggested a City daughter with a million to me; that's his plan—to go into the City like Dick Whittington in quest of a fortune."

"And why not consider the plan?"

"Because a good many fellows go driving into the City on that search now, and Lord Mayors' daughters are getting very scarce; they are daily more difficult to find, my lord. Lucky fellow! You need not carry a lantern beyond Temple Bar questing a City fortune. Every woman in England is at the beck of your majesty's finger. Why don't you up with that finger, and make a selection, then? Confer another peeress on a grateful country. Lord! how I wish I were a lord. Why don't you decide? A prince who hesitates from which dainty

dish to help himself stands as good a chance as anybody of being starved out in the end. Ah! had I but been sharp at school and minded my book! I might have been clever if I pleased; and cleverness is better than money, than youth, than luck, than a peerage even—than anything. Look at old Carteret—jolly old Carteret! With no more hair on his head than this snuff-box, yet he is going to marry the woman with the finest hair in London, and the handsomest face besides—beauty to boot—the most perfect beauty in Europe, and all on account of having brains. Now if I were but a marrying man!"

"What! Carteret the widower! old Lord Carteret—going to marry again?"

"There is no such thing as an old Prime Minister in England, my Lord."

"And who may the intended victim be?" inquires Lincoln, in a dreamy inattentive way. "His wife is but recently dead"—

"The finest woman in Europe, as I say—the famous Pomfret beauty, Lady Sophia. But you

must have seen her—you—of course you must know."

"Lady Sophia Fermor!"

"Lady Sophia Fermor. And as he has already buried one wife, and intends, perhaps, to bury another, there is no time to lose about it; he is naturally impatient; so the marriage is to be at once. However, I commend his pluck as I do his taste, but his pluck most. I admire the lady's discretion also, as much as her perfect beauty. She has made a capital throw of it. She must be Lady Granville. The tough old mother-in-law can't last for ever, and Lady Granville she will be. Now were I as tipsy, as rich, as clever, and as bald as Carteret"——

"Carteret! Who has invented this silly slander, Keats? You booby! the author of this report? The man might be her father—her grandfather!" and Lincoln started from his seat, scowling at his companion. "Old Lord Carteret!"

"Only shows you the force of brains as I say. And they are to be married at once—within a week

that is the proviso made by the lady, mark you. She appears afraid the old gentleman might wriggle out of his bargain, and slip through her fingers. Some other people, 'tis said, have done that already. That appears to be the only apprehension of the lady, and as for her mother? Oh! Lady Pomfret is already tip-toe about it—passes every acquaintance in the street since the close of the negotiations. Bless me, Lincoln! now I remember, this should be a delicate subject for you; and look here, if you had as much brains as Carteret, she never would have been his wife; there's my opinion for you. Hillo!"

But Lord Lincoln snatched up his hat and cloak, and strode from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

CARTERET.

THE strange announcement concerning Lady Sophia Fermor, which had exploded so suddenly into Lincoln's face, had been a subject of fashionable interest for some days. The king himself joked about it, and, with royal taste, congratulated the married daughter of Lord Carteret on obtaining so famous a beauty for step-mother. The prince declared the favourite statesman in his dotage. Elderly politicians, roués of a former generation, and bacchanalian cronies of the minister, gobbled up the news in Club windows, passing on the details from hand to hand, sharing the dainty morsels gleefully. Great ladies tossed their powdered heads, and envied Lady Pomfret. Many of the dilettante literary people, whose

correspondence has descended to us, refer to the event. Mrs. Delany writes diffusely on this subject, and Horace Walpole does not miss so fair an opportunity of putting pen to paper.

"I will not talk any more politically," he writes, "but turn to hymeneals, with as much indifference as if I were a First Minister. Who do you think is going to marry Lady Sophia Fermor? Only my Lord Carteret!!! This very week! A drawing-room conquest! Do but imagine how many passions will be gratified in that family! Her own ambition, vanity, and resentment—love she never had any—the politics, management, and pedantry of the mother, who will think to govern her son-in-law out of Froissart. Figure to yourself the instructions she will give her daughter. Lord Chesterfield says, 'tis only another of Carteret's vigorous measures. I am really glad of it, for her beauty and cleverness did deserve a better fate than she was on the point of having determined for her for ever. How graceful, how charming, how haughtily condescending she will

be! Now, if Lincoln should ever hint past history, she will

> 'Stare upon the strange man's face
> As one she ne'er had known.' "

Ordinarily, when a tragic event connected with a disappointment of the affections occurs, it is some luckless maiden of humble parentage who figures as the heroine thereof, who has recourse to the poisoned bowl, the hasty plunge, or the fatal dagger; rarely a lady of conspicuous rank and birth. In her case harrowed feelings must be stifled, or only indulged in the safety of seclusion. Yet there are bloodless tragedies performed with unseen weapons. Under the smooth flow of luxurious social life, secret murders of the affections; deeds as desperate as ever were done with the knife's point—prompt, merciless suicides of one's own happiness—and often to attain an imagined end of retaliation or revenge upon some heedless and contented traitor.

Lord Lincoln had abandoned her, and Lady Sophia Fermor desired to show how much she felt

his loss. No price was too much to pay for letting him understand how slight a place he had ever occupied in her thoughts.

Lord Carteret met her at the drawing-room, witnessed her beauty for the first time then, and fell a victim to it on the spot. He vowed, he ventured, he proposed, and was, perhaps to his surprise, accepted. Lord Carteret was eminently a man of courage and of action; this rapid and successful courtship was but another illustration of his energy and genius. He was fifty odd years of age, a widower, and only just a widower. He had several married daughters many years older than Lady Sophia, and grandchildren besides; but what did it matter? Lord Carteret or Lord Methuselah. Revenge and suicide, not love and sentiment, were the points at issue—revenge on Lincoln, suicide of all affection for ever. Lord Carteret was the most convenient instrument with which to execute this double purpose, and Lady Sophia did not waver; besides, he was First Minister, the cleverest statesman in England, moreover

the bitter antagonist of the detested Pelhams, the successful rival of the buffoon Newcastle, and his ambitious and pretentious brother. There was balm to wounded feelings in this accident of Lord Carteret's rivalry of the Pelhams. Lady Sophia had hardened into all pride and all ambition. It was something in itself to be wife of the First Minister, but everything when that minister was likewise the successful opponent of the family which had injured her, refused to receive her within its ranks, and blighted the happiness of her life. Perhaps the lover himself recognised the accident to which he owed his happiness. Lady Sophia might have expressed herself thus in substance to him, if not in words: "My lord, you do me the honour to solicit my hand; you are welcome to it, on condition of taking it at once. If you can make me your wife within a week, I promise to be faithful to you, and love you, as well as I am able to love; but within a week I must be borne to your elderly arms. There is to be a marriage down at Esher soon; ours must be celebrated first. A certain

gentleman exhibits his indifference bravely, and I do not desire to appear very miserable at his behaviour." If one is resolved on a desperate enterprise, where is the gain of hesitating about the execution of it? Lady Sophia Fermor found that her nerves were strong enough, that her courage never blenched in contemplating the sacrifice. If this man could not gratify her affection, he could console her pride, confer a high position, and, dearer than all, procure a triumph over her enemies. At the time Lord Carteret was the most remarkable public man in England. Smollett says, "the only statesman worth the meal that whitened his periwig;" and Swift, who is never done making his panegyric, "that he had been ambassador in several courts when his age would hardly allow him to take a degree, and Principal Secretary of State at a period when, according to custom, he ought to have been busy in losing his money at a chocolate-house, or in other amusements equally laudable and epidemic among persons of honour."

His ambition was on a par with his natural

gifts. A brilliant scholar, with a natural eloquence, practised in debate, ready in wit, unsurpassed in sarcasm, a profound thinker, and a trained diplomatist. If often unscrupulous in the application of means, and rash in political action, yet the projector of every daring coup in Parliament, and singularly fortunate in his enterprises; alternately the terror and hope of contesting factions. In addition, his solid attainments equalled his political importance and his talents: he spoke and wrote a group of languages with facility—French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, even German. He was the only minister who could converse with the king in his own language, and other members of the cabinet, standing jealously by, imagined that their colleague and his Majesty were plotting together in this most incomprehensible of modern tongues. It was not always imagination on their part. But there was no circumscribing the minister's talents; if he learned like a German, he also drank like a Dutchman; no doubt as to his capacity in either way. The Pelhams said boldly that the minister

was seldom sober. Walpole, that he never was so: "He is never sober; his rants are amazing; so are his parts and spirits."

But then everybody drank; even the great commoner himself fell into the prevailing fashion:

> "How as Pitt wandered darkling o'er the plain,
> His reason drowned in Jenkinson's champagne."

Everybody—the prince, the minister, the chancellor, the magistrates, the constables, the valets. Walpole records "that the Duke of Newcastle gave a dinner last Sunday to the ministers at Claremont"—the ministers being Lord Bath, Lord Carteret, Lord Limerick, &c.—"where their servants got so drunk, that when they came to the inn over against the gate of Newpark, the coachman, who was the only remaining fragment of their suite, tumbled off the box, and there they were planted." Even the fine gentlemen of the Dilettanti Club drank. According to Walpole "the nominal qualification for the Club was having been in Italy, the real one being drunk."

Carteret was not one of those cold spirits the

fire of which is put out by the fuel, says Lord Macaulay. The sentence refers to his capacity for learning only. Macaulay, a Scotchman, could not have intended a joke in it. In truth Carteret's spirits never flagged either because of fuel or for want of it. Flag, forsooth! a man to whom half-a gallon of burgundy was a daily allowance—how could they?

"Sole minister, wicked minister, odious minister, execrable minister," as Pitt called him, who, in his own character of superfine minister, we presume, was entitled to pronounce on a rival who surpassed him in parts and attainments, and who did not surpass him in perfidy. Not that Carteret ever affected the sublime as Pitt did; there might have been liquor, but there was no hypocrisy in him; his affectations were of another order; his impulses were swifter, his blood warmer. He would plot and struggle for power as energetically as any, while the fit was on him; while in the push of the contest; but he could not behave with any decency to a necessary underling, or an incapable

colleague when the struggle was over: he had in his nature all that haughtiness which Pitt affected to have, and he could not or would not bridle it as the other did. It made every man of inferior capacity his enemy, and in the end ruined—no! defeated him merely, for he was never less humble than in defeat. When his schemes failed, when the fall came, it did not appear to touch him; he went off laughing at the victor, whoever he was. The same sarcasm reached the buffoonery of Newcastle, the craft of Henry Pelham, the corruption of their party, and, with equal readiness, the ostentatious purity of "the great Commoner."

Carteret himself was as arrogant as any great commoner who then or since has ever tasted that dearest of joys, the delight of domineering the House. In victory or defeat he was the same: his principles often gave way, his pride never, his courage never: drunk or sober, he was always audacious and superb. Right or wrong, he held his course; he could not be shouted out of his judgment or out of his senses—made to bound this way or

that like a frightened squirrel in a paroxysm of ministerial unreadiness—he was never squeezable. He did vary his policy, but it was through capriciousness, waywardness, or pride — never through fear. There was that fierce energy in him, he could not be influenced by his own party, nor coerced by the other ; he had an equal contempt for his adversaries, his colleagues, and—— his conscience.

How different from certain other great commoners since his time, who exhibit, perhaps, an equal regard for all three, and yet who manage by a quieter method also to domineer Parliament as successfully as he did, while at the same time shining like Pitt with ostentatious purity, and as Carteret would have disdained to shine, with self-righteous airs of sanctimonious superiority and private virtue! When Pitt and Newcastle reigned in conjunction the administration was invincible. The presence of Pitt explains the continuance of the Duke in office, while the small cunning and pettifogging arts of his colleague helped

to make the sublimity of the great commoner endurable.

Pitt was there to blaze, to carry off the admiration of the audience, to do the stagey effects, as it were; and never was actor better trained for the part; every accessory was made use of as an agent —even his gout was turned into an assistant. He entered the House in all "the pomp of flannel," with his morality and honour always screwed up to concert pitch, above the commonplace level of ordinary virtue. Thus he sustained the reputation of the firm; while the busy Newcastle attended to the counter and the customers, and the sharp and shabby practices which brought money to the till—the lying, and buying and bartering, selling of place and pensions. Early and late he was there, as assiduous as any living statesman, paring the sovereigns, and reckoning the value of matchboxes, suppose, and exacting his "extra twopences," shall we say—Lord! how history repeats itself—grim, penny-wise old money-changer that

he was; for next to power he loved money, and in both money and power he was a miser, with his midriff up against every petition having for basis a wise, or kindly, or humanising influence or object, perhaps with his boot ready raised to kick unwelcome deputations downstairs—if that were the official manner in those days—or to do any other congenial work properly belonging to the business of saving money, and civility, and carrying on a strong government. By the way, if there were matches in those days, what rude attempts they must have been!—aggravating luxuries, of uncertain scrape, damp and bituminous, no doubt, smelling with abominable directness of the bottomless pit. It was scarcely worth any man's while to lay taxes on them then. Yet there are strange points of resemblance between the statesmanship of the two epochs—that day and this present one.

There was the Pitt character, the great commoner's—is not that filled up with us? and the Newcastle part, the mean, crafty and miserly character—have we not that necessary ingredient also?

Can it be that strong governments are always built up in the same way as that one of which Newcastle was a prop?—erected on the same scaffolding? in the same style of architecture? mortared together with the same materials?—say a morality on the proscenium, astuteness and chicanery for the interior construction, and quackery for cement?

British taste is heavy in the matter of its amusements, and is not easily shaken out of old grooves; it loves to find the same set of stock characters in comedies of a certain order, so that the way can be easily followed through the mazes of the plot: it laughs at the stale jokes very contentedly, the old circus article that one knows is so good beforehand; and readily accepts Mr. Merryman as wit because he has flour on his face. As with actors, so with statesmen.

Your man of genius is as necessary to the proper cast of a government as harlequin is to the pantomime. Moreover, he must stand at the forefront of the stage, and do his posturing in the full

glare of the footlights, as was always done: he must blaze, or tumble, and be remarkable and distinguished to the full strength of his ability; for John Bull and family are seated there, and expect value for the money.

Mr. Pitt, or anybody else (no matter what individual fills up the part, it is merely a professional one) must strut it finely during the performing hour, though afterwards he may take off his fine character and hang it on a peg, as Mr. Pitt sometimes did between the acts, and as every brother professional has to do. Let us suppose a grand opera is being performed, and William Tell, say, paces up to the front in his stagey walk, a magnificent person, superior, sublime: no wonder the pit gapes at that strutting and pretentious figure, yet William will have his beer behind the slips by-and-by, when all is over, as contentedly as the meanest scene-shifter: that conscious hero is mortal, like any one of us, and, as much as the humblest actor, depends for his popularity on the accessories of the stage—the gas-lights, the fiddling,

and the prompter's box. It is as needful to set out his name in the daily play-bills to puff him—as necessary to bill this blazing star, although he performs the character every night, as if he were the merest jackpudding of the troupe. Then, to balance William, there is the wicked tyrant Gessler, the villain of the piece; he who commands the cruel ordeal of the apple, and who would smile to see that treacherous arrow, may be, strike the human mark. We execrate the one character, and admire and applaud the other, yet most unfairly—we are partial in our criticism, for the villain is every bit as necessary to the success of the whole performance as the hero himself: poor Gessler, or Shylock, or Harpagon, or whoever be the needful scoundrel who happens at the time to occupy the boards—let him have his clap too.

One character sustains the other. You must have the whole cast filled to make up a strong government; and everything strong, no matter how you get at it, is good, and right, and popular, and British.

However, Lord Carteret had a reputation for eloquence, but one is suspicious about the abounding oratory of that period of imperfect reporting. When friends, or toadies, or a party cried up a man's oratorical reputation then, posterity must believe in it. Luckily for the individual, there are no verbatim reports to put in evidence to show that his pretensions were ill-founded. To say a man spoke well then should be taken as much on trust by those who were not by as to say he sang well; it was as impossible for an absentee to know anything about it. We have great orators now, but every one can measure their size. We take up a newspaper report of a stale great speech when all the interest and passion of the subject have died out, and judge calmly according to the evidence. But the last century was a time rich in mysteries. We remember reading that Mr. Fox when very young made a resolution of speaking well or ill at least once every night in the House, and that for five whole sessions he kept his rule. Stupendous statement! Not so much that he did it,

but how did he manage to do it? Who allowed him? How did Mr. Fox get the opportunity of thus perfecting himself in debate at the expense of his audience, and that audience the House? He was not heir to a dukedom, and a handful of millions, that he should have enjoyed the privilege of being such a supernatural bore. Pray, by what artifice did he succeed in catching the Speaker's eye in every debate for five sessions? Or was that organ as discriminating, as educated, as near-sighted, as it has since become? Were there no Speaker's lists? We know that the existence of such things is even now denied. One great commoner has done so in his place in Parliament, and another lesser commoner has backed him up. Does either imagine that anybody credits the denial? How is it possible to carry on the government of the country, or give that necessary prominence to the upper dozen in the House, without a Speaker's list? Suppose every member were to adopt the rule of Mr. Fox, and insist on executing it as resolutely, night after night, all through the session—what

a pleasant possession a seat in the House would be!

However, Lord Carteret retains as authentic a reputation for oratory as any statesman of his time, and in other respects few statesmen were his equals.

He had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and was now Prime Minister—just the character to attract a daring, proud, handsome, ambitious, desperate woman, smarting from the indignity of a recent desertion, and eager for the readiest opportunity of revenge.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRIDEGROOM TAKES PRECAUTIONS.

THERE were, however, some drawbacks to this promising marriage. Lord Carteret, with all his accomplishments, was self-willed, passionate, and overbearing; and when in a fit of temper—Granville temper—unrestrained in his actions and in his language. His mother, Lady Granville, was alive, and it was understood that his first wife, though of the happiest disposition, had not led the happiest of lives with the terrible old Countess.

Besides, there were some objectionable domestic circumstances. In the first place, Lady Dysart, my lord's eldest daughter, was twelve years older than Lady Sophia Fermor, and a very proud and haughty personage besides. Louisa, the second, had married Lord Weymouth, and Georgina, Mr. Spencer,

afterwards Earl Spencer, the favourite grandson of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, whose fortune he inherited. If none of those ladies could rival Lady Sophia in beauty, they all possessed a sufficient share of personal attractions; and if Lady Sophia had that sort of vanity she might well be proud of the connections which the marriage was bringing her. Mrs. Delany describes the three sisters dressed for a Drawing-room on the Birthday:

"I yesterday saw the three married daughters most completely dressed, and three very fine figures they were; though very different beauties. Lady Dysart's face is handsomer than ever; but Lady Weymouth's person bears away the bell, and Mrs. Spencer is neither so handsome as Lady Dysart, nor so genteel as Lady Weymouth, and yet altogether she is as agreeable as either of them. Lady Dysart's clothes were pink armazine, trimmed with silver; Mrs. Spencer's, white satin, embroidered with silver; Lady Weymouth, white brocaded lutestring, with silver and colours. Lord

Weymouth gave her the day before the Birthday a brilliant necklace worth two thousand guineas. Our cousins, the Carterets, are now growing the most important people in the kingdom. If their heads are not turned with it, I may say of them as was once said of a man that bragged that he could look down a precipice without being giddy, that he had the strongest or the weakest head in the world. I think my Lord Carteret is the most happy in all the circumstances of life that I have ever known, and all my fear is that he will be too rich."

There was also an unmarried daughter Fanny, afterwards Marchioness of Tweeddale, and one son. This only son, in delicate health and of unsound mind, furnished the elderly minister with an excuse for again venturing to fetter his liberty with the shackles of matrimony. It was necessary to perpetuate the name in heirs male, he said.

However, Lady Mary Montagu refers directly to his motives in soliciting Lady Sophia Fermor: "If Lord Carteret," she writes, "had the design you mention, he could not have made a more proper

choice; but I think too well of his understanding to suppose he can expect happiness from things unborn, or place it in the chimerical notion of any pleasure arising to him from his name subsisting, perhaps by very sorry representatives, after his death. I am apter to imagine that he has indulged his inclination at the expense of his judgment, and it appears to me the most pardonable of weaknesses. I am less surprised at Lady Sophia's marriage than at the fortune Lord Pomfret has given her. She has charms enough to expect to make her fortune, and I believe the raising of such a sum must be uneasy in his present circumstances."

So, notwithstanding these charms, Lord Carteret had no design of self-sacrifice, of being knocked down a bargain to a penniless bride. He stood out for a fortune, and obtained it; as Lord Pomfret would have submitted to any pecuniary inconvenience rather than lose the brilliant connection.

Walpole makes a note upon this, and furnishes us with minute memoranda on the monetary

arrangements consequent on the wedding. It is quite plain that his temper or his feelings have again come to the surface:

"She is to have sixteen hundred pounds a year jointure, four hundred pin money, and two thousand of jewels. Carteret says he does not intend to marry the mother. What do you think my lady intends?"

But the most serious drawback to the marriage was Lady Granville, who was still alive, and reigning with absolute sovereignty in her son's household, accepting and doing the full honours of his position.

It would be impossible to conjure up a more appalling apparition of a mother-in-law. This old beldam was the black shadow which had darkened, if it did not actually terminate, the existence of the first Lady Carteret. She assumed a regal style and manner, moved about dressed in ermine and velvet, conveyed her wishes to the menials by signs, and was absurd as she was proud, ill-tempered, and insolent. Mrs. Delany, her near

relative, calls her "the old dragoness," and paints her in most dismal colours.

Her son, herself, her family, her granddaughters —the splendour of their beauty, their splendid position, and the great matches they achieved— were the constant subjects of her thoughts and conversation. Yet, notwithstanding her exalted station, and the divinity which hedged in her person (she was Countess in her own right)—moreover, the sort of regal form and state which surrounded her, the many ascending degrees of lackeys, pages, waiting-women, gentlewomen, through which only her person could be approached— Lady Granville had a rare gift of tongue, and when under the excitement of passion became as eloquent not only as her famous son himself, but as any shrewish member of her own sex. When my lady was roused, when in a tantrum, every member of her household who had an opportunity of doing so made haste to shift his quarters.

It was said that Carteret feared no man but his

mother; and that was no disparagement to his spirit. At all events he had changed his residence many days before his proposal to Lady Sophia, and when that event took place he preferred to make his mother acquainted with it by letter rather than by a personal interview. It was in a letter couched in terms of the most extreme duty and respect that the arrogant minister informed his haughty mother of his coming happiness.

The pressure of public affairs, he said, alone prevented him from conveying the joyful tidings in person, and the exigencies of these mysterious public affairs were so great as to necessitate his remaining at his official residence; so imperative even were the requirements of the state that he could not spare time to rest for one night under his own roof. How a man so occupied could find leisure to make love so rapidly and successfully as he had done was a puzzle.

Lady Granville sent for her family physician, and went to bed when this fatal letter arrived. It was all over: she perceived that an end had

come to that long reign of domestic omnipotence which she had enjoyed during the whole lifetime of the first Lady Carteret, whom the old dowager had put under from the first, and kept down with a firm hand, from the period of her honeymoon until death came, bringing relief and deliverance; but now it was a very different case. Imagine subjugating a young and haughty beauty like Lady Sophia Fermor, with such a woman as Lady Pomfret to sustain her, and do battle for her rights. The feminine instinct of Lady Granville divined that the balance of power would lean altogether to the other side now, and that if anybody went under it would not be the daughter-in-law. It was plain this designing minx had merely condescended to accept the elderly minister; she had weighed wealth and position against his years and widowhood, and craftily bartered her dainty person for his grandeur.

The imperious son must himself become the slave of this conceited Fermor beauty: Lady Granville

perceived that the period had come for her to abdicate at last; that she must descend from the domestic throne, march down from the dais, and cease to be a royal personage for ever after. Her superb dynasty was deposed, and an intriguing parvenu set come to reign in her place. There would be a domestic invasion of these scheming Pomfrets; the whole brood would come flocking in to take possession of Carteret House. The remaining daughters would use the connection to obtain provisions for themselves, and entertainments with that object would follow—extravagance—an expenditure which would be recklessly administered, which the clever mother-in-law would keep in her own hands altogether. The old Countess wept; but though her mortification flowed away in those scalding tears, it left her nothing but a consciousness of her impotency to interfere. Then in her humble helplessness she sent for her granddaughters, to consult with them.

There was an identity of interest and of motive, and the Ladies Dysart and Weymouth were very

properly aroused and alarmed. They exhibited a spirit becoming the emergency. Instigated by the Countess, they immediately drove across the town and remonstrated with their father, doubtless in an indignant feminine tone proper to the occasion; but they might have spared their breath—better for them if they had done so. Lord Carteret was not one to excuse or justify his fancies or his follies to his own children, and those ladies were assailed by a flow of classical Billingsgate from the angry Lear. Goneril and Regan returned discomfited: and these unfilial ambassadresses continued long afterwards to repent their hasty interference. The young unmarried daughter Fanny alone, of all his family, congratulated her father, and was pleased that he was again to seek happiness in marriage. But no one in London rejoiced more at the whole affair than the Duke of Newcastle. It was so exactly the sort of event which he desired; it was in every way so admirable that Lincoln's goddess should sell herself to a grandfather for wealth and station, that the Duke could not contain himself, but, notwith-

standing affairs of state and Hanoverian difficulties, drove off at once to find his nephew, and obtain a personal triumph over him. There was a scouring east wind abroad, and a fixed rheumatism twinging in his shoulder, but the jubilant old man disregarded his health and comfort on so happy an occasion.

Lincoln, however, was not then at any of the Clubs, nor to be found in any of his accustomed haunts, and the Duke's impatience was disappointed; besides, an accident came to throw him off the immediate track of his nephew, and divert his energies into another channel, for while looking for Lincoln, he encountered on the steps of a Club an eager member of the House, who was looking for himself: this was an underling who enjoyed the advantage of being in his confidence; so far at least as anybody could be said to be privy to the mind of a man who changed it a dozen times a day. However, this gentleman happened to be big with important secrets, for he explained that Mr. Pitt had shown a disposition to accept certain overtures

which had been made to him; he was in a temper to treat at the moment, and his mood should be promptly availed of; so the Duke stepped into his coach and drove off at once to profit by the news, and to meet Mr. Murray, the Attorney-General, who was waiting for a conference. A coalition with Pitt was exactly what Newcastle dreamt of at the moment. He already perceived that an alliance with some prominent man was inevitable, although he had infinite pains and misgivings in coming to the point, and only under pressure of abject fear consented at last to propose a partnership with the great orator, for it was plain that, under such an arrangement, he must be content with a subordinate post. The splendid abilities of Pitt, as well as the haughtiness of his disposition, rendered union between them impossible on any other conditions; but the Duke consoled himself by reflecting that the very arrogance of the great man might eventually be turned into a greater source of profit, as it made him indifferent to the substantial fruits of power

—the distribution of places and offices—which to Newcastle were the breath of life. Doubtless, he would have to eat humble pie; but he had resolution enough not to shrink from a bruise to his vanity when the other consequence was to the profit of his avarice—a lion's share of the national pudding, into which his greedy fingers were always itching to plunge. Besides, a union with either Pitt or Fox was inevitable. One or other should be on his side, to protect him from the assaults of the rival in opposition. And Pitt, for the very reason of his greater loftiness of mind, was a more profitable if less tractable comrade than the other. The Duke might have to endure more from Pitt, but as compensation the superb spirit would leave him all the offal to batten on; and this was the second attempt at negotiation which had been made—the previous one had failed; as had a combination with Fox also, so it was now decided that Pitt must be obtained on the terms which he would accept—the Duke decided to have him at any price, relying to cheat him afterwards in

carrying out the contract, a proceeding which he seldom failed in effecting.

On reaching his official residence Newcastle duly found the Attorney-General waiting. Mr. Murray had set his professional eye on the Chief Justiceship of Appeal, and it was the price of his allegiance. Being out of office, and yet remote from power, there was no limit to the Duke's fine promises of what should follow if their plot succeeded; and the lawyer had not then the acquaintance with the character of his grace which he acquired later on.

They sat together for some time, the Duke exposing his programme with the utmost care to exhibit as little as possible of his real intentions as far as he knew them—this in a running off voluble way characteristic of the utmost straightforwardness and candour—when an attendant entered, saying that two persons were waiting without, at the same time whispering their names. With the flighty aptitude for seizing at chance opportunities which was one of his characteristics, the Duke saw an

opportunity here of a possible show off before his visitor, and decided to admit them on the spot.

"Ah! Mr. Lee, the parish curate, about those charity schools, I suppose; they are much wanted indeed; show him up," he cried aloud. "Excellent man, earnest in his calling, Mr. Murray. No mere matter of business, however important or pressing, shall interfere with the fulfilment of a duty which I regard as sacred. You can admit Mr. Lee, Mr. Harley. Every man who interests himself in a work of usefulness or benevolence is entitled to my co-operation. We are all labourers in the vineyard. You will not mind a few minutes employed on so excellent an object? Capital fellow, Lee, devoted to the ministry—instructing the ignorant, clothing the naked, charity, works of mercy, and so forth," added the Duke, as the curate entered with a complimentary phrase on his lips, in which "the well-known piety and eminent charity of his grace" were the set ingredients.

Mr. Murray smiled when a subscription list, with a request for his grace's signature, was pre-

sented—Newcastle's love of money was well known—but without any hesitation the Duke took a pen and wrote down £100—£100 to a trumpery thing of the kind! Mr. Murray was as much astonished as the clergyman, perhaps, who withdrew immediately, bowing his acknowledgments to the carpet. Neither of them was aware that the Duke had latterly adopted this simple off-hand way of dealing with subscription lists. Where a large sum was solicited or expected, he gave it freely—gave his name for it, that is—but the money was never, or, to be exact, very rarely paid. Why should it be? To have his name down was already an advantage to the church, or hospital, or charity-school—to see so famous a name figuring at the head of the list opposite a handsome sum incited others to competitive acts of generosity. And as attempting to exact the money afterwards from his grace by any pressure in a public way would only create unprofitable scandal, such an experiment was never resorted to. The Duke therefore took great credit to himself for the invention

of this excellent means of advancing every praiseworthy project without taxing his purse, or causing himself personal inconvenience; but he was particular as to the class of charities which he patronised, and none but praiseworthy undertakings were able to obtain the distinction of his signature. However, as the grateful clergyman withdrew, an individual in very shabby attire appeared in the doorway, presenting a face in which the haggard blotchiness of drink struggled against the hollowness of starvation. This was a poet, with a dedication in verse to his grace; a hack, whom he occasionally employed in literary services. Here was another chance opportunity of making the lawyer indirectly aware of his private virtues; so the Duke smiled in an inviting and encouraging way.

"It is the duty of men in our position, Mr. Murray, to encourage literature in all its respectable branches, and to patronise its votaries. I have always acknowledged a bias for literature myself; my natural inclination lies very much

in that way," added the Duke, holding up his finger as a signal to the poet, who advanced into the room with a cringing stride, polishing his napless hat with his greasy cuff. "Any man who means well, no matter how humble his position, is sure of my encouragement when he has any degree of merit; and I think this scruff has some. Give me your opinion on it; I defer to your judgment. Come, Davis, let us have your production aloud. Don't mind the presence of this gentleman, he is one of my friends; it will be something for you if he approves your performance. Read it out for us. Raise your voice and proceed; it is most tiresome for gentlemen to sit by and listen to a fellow like you mumbling in his muckinger. I have no secrets from my friend; you need not be afraid of saying anything of me before him. Lay your hat and your modesty aside; there—not there, you will injure the carpet—place it on the fender stool. Now. So so! Very good. Ah! that is too strong; you will have me blush." And the Duke sat listening, complacently nodding his head, and beating

time with his foot, as the poet travelled on, mouthing and gesticulating to the end of his flattering fustian.

"Bravo! bravo! it will do very well. But these praises of myself are not deserved; they are flatteries, and make me blush. You deserve a guinea. The patch shows talent, eh Mr. Murray? But you must soften the lines about my parts; put in all you will about my earnestness of purpose, my good faith; though I say it, you cannot exaggerate them. The one thought of my life is to serve my country and my king. Perhaps I am without high attainments; I may have but a single talent, indeed, but I have not hidden that in a hole; I have always striven to do my utmost. Let it be said of me in death, 'He was a man of humble aspirations, and of indifferent parts; but great in the sacrifice of every private feeling for the commonweal; true to his conscience and his faith, loving to his enemies, faithful to his friends.' It will be known by-and-by, Mr. Murray, when all things come to light, that Newcastle never betrayed a friend; whatever faults are laid to his charge, he was always true

to those who loved him." The Duke spoke shuffling and stammering, fidgeting about, tugging at his watch, darting sidelong glances at the cool and silent lawyer; while the poet, glowing with pride and pleasure, and emboldened by encouragement, produced another manuscript, and in a confident voice broke out:

"Here, also, is the draught of the lampoon which your grace commanded me to compose against Mr. Pitt. If it is your grace's pleasure, I will read it before this gentleman, to judge of the points. Your grace will find it strong; it was commanded strong. I have endeavoured to meet your grace's wishes—ahem!"

"What! against Mr. Pitt?—one of the greatest of living men! You filthy wretch!" screams out the Duke.

"But your grace's orders. Was I not to put drunkenness, treachery, and profligacy into it, and to have ten guineas if strong enough?—and I stake my life 'tis good value for twenty. Your grace will see how it bites."

"What! I commanded—a—a lampoon on Mr. Pitt? You slanderous scoundrel! Mr. Murray, pay no heed to this. You shall be set in the pillory, my good fellow. I will have you in the King's Bench for slander. Mr. Murray, you are witness. You shall lose your ears, my friend. What! Mr. Pitt—the brightest ornament of the empire, the great orator, the idol of the nation —to be defamed by this scullion! My friend, possibly my colleague in office, as you are aware—Mr. Murray, is it likely on the face of it? This fellow must have a public whipping. See! Harley, Gregory," and the Duke's signal-bell tinkled. "I do not care for myself. I am hardened to misrepresentation; I can support calumny; but my friend, to be stabbed by this villain! I can be merciless for my friend. Calumniate Mr. Pitt! I disregard everything else; but my arm is long enough to reach the reptile which has endeavoured to smirch with its venom the whiteness of that spotless character. Traduce Mr. Pitt! Gregory, send for a constable."

"With all my heart," said the poet, flaring up. "Send for your constable, my Lord Duke, and let him take possession of these papers along with that," he added, flourishing a package in the air, "and let the whole affair be dragged into day. I am ready for your constable, sir; send for him. Do his grace's bidding. I surrender myself and these letters to the law."

"Stop! stop! we can't allow a scandalous scene here. Stay, Gregory; get this fellow downstairs, —and keep him quiet, I will see him privately," whispered the Duke, turning pale; "it would give scope to evil tongues, to bring him before a public court; let him be locked up safe; we shall deal with him at leisure."

"Had I not better retire also, my Lord Duke?" asks Mr. Murray, with grinning politeness.

"I shall have a hundred pounds for holding my tongue. Do you hear, you lying old skeleton?" screams out the bard, with an outrageous loudness. "I had five guineas of you for libelling Mr. Fox about the Treasury boroughs; you pro-

mised me ten, and put me off, promising the other five out of the secret service money when you came into office. You a minister! I aint afraid of the pillory, not I. Set me up in it! Do take me to the King's Bench—why don't ye?"

"A scurrilous, ill-conditioned scoundrel! a serpent that I warmed in my bosom!" said the Duke, as the man was removed. "All I have done for that fellow, Murray! Got his wife into the housekeeper's room at Esher, and taken him out of a chandlery in the City, and set him up as a poet; but they are all the same, those literary fellows; he would libel me, his benefactor, for a crown tomorrow. You don't fancy Pitt is a man to attend to the chatter of such carrion? However, if the project succeeds—and I shall see our friends, and arrange the basis of a treaty with Mr. Pitt at once," added his Grace, confidentially. "As for yourself, of course there is no other man for the King's Bench, if you decide to accept it, though I wonder you should; you might have the Seals

by-and-by, the other is in your reach any time. But as for Pitt, it would be very ill indeed if this fellow's story should come to his ears now our negotiations are pending. Don't you think so yourself?" Mr. Murray agreed that it would, and presently took his leave, suffering his new colleague to remain in uncomfortable incertitude as to the impression which he carried away from the scene.

Then the Duke sent for the culprit poet, promised him a hundred guineas if he would hold his tongue, and added a pledge to make him Laureate if ever he became first minister.

Scarcely had the interview ended when a detective, employed to track Lord Lincoln through the town, came in to report progress. The uncle was well pleased to learn that his nephew had shown signs of returning life again; that he had country-danced at Mrs. Haycroft's, supped at Lady Caroline Fanshaw's, dropped into White's, and lost, among other items, £400 to Captain Keats, who very likely wanted the money very

badly. It was satisfactory to learn that Lincoln had shaken off his indolent mood and commenced a wholesome life of pleasure again; but the uncle was not then aware of how entirely his heir had changed his habits, and endeavoured to make up for lost time in that way.

For as a set-off to recent retirement, he had plunged into various gaieties and dissipations; he made stray bachelor friendships, some of them doubtful ones enough. Captain Keats had very black sheep on his visiting list, and Lincoln made acquaintance with the entire flock; he gave cosy bachelor dinners to these people, and joined a certain club to which they belonged; he drank freely at supper parties there; moreover, when in liquor, joked recklessly about Carteret and his bride, and in execrable taste, toasted the youthful pair; then it happened that he goes off one night with a party of these jovial companions to dance at Ranelagh Gardens.

Ranelagh was then in its pride, the suppers were famous there, so was the music. Miss Cecilia

Young with her wonderful voice; the ballet theatre, lately introduced, and fireworks, which ranked as a surprising invention.

So Lincoln goes away to dance at Ranelagh; the reader may remember that he excelled in dancing.

It happened to be one of the gala nights of the season. Crowds filled the gardens, Rotunda, and supper-rooms; taxing the space and resources of the establishment so much that many persons preferred to be served *al fresco* in the garden than fight a way through the press upstairs. There was some drinking and freedom among these guests out of doors, and as the night drew on the more decorous of the company withdrew.

It was then that Lincoln and his friends, who had had plenty of dancing, and also of wine, decided to conclude the night with a quiet supper, and carried out this intention so well that they presently fell into a quarrel with the party of one Dawson, a notorious mohawk and bully, who was supping beside them in the next booth. Both parties had

had wine enough, and a scuffle ensued. Plates, and glasses, and furniture were smashed; waiters and women ran screaming for the watch; swords were drawn. Captain Keats received a scratch on the arm; while one of the other side was badly hurt. It was a scandal. However, when the constables arrived, they were careful to arrest the others, who were of the meaner class, and suffer the party of gentlemen to go free; for the discrimination of our police in that respect is not of modern date. But in this instance the discretion of the constables was thrown away, for, notwithstanding every precaution, the affair got into the 'London Evening Post,' was talked of at the Clubs, and was considered an awkward accident for Lord Lincoln, on account of his position as Lord in Waiting.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PERSONAL TRIUMPH.

On a forenoon following this event, Lincoln was in the act of completing a most elaborate costume; he was about to appear in the Mall in St. James's Park hard by, and had resisted all the persuasions of his valet, who, as a finishing stroke to his toilet, suggested just one patch, and a *soupçon* merely of rouge—for that mode of French beaux was then creeping into England.

Alphonse was very persistent on the point; for recent contact with dissipation had left its mark, and slightly damaged the freshness of his Lordship's cheek. "Milord just looked a little pale," pleaded the considerate and critical servant, who had all the enthusiasm of an artist in his employment. Then, in all innocence, he inquired what lady's

favour—"blue, rose, violet or blanche"—he was to knot upon the sword-hilt of milord. For answer the man was ordered from the room; yet Alphonse was innocent of any sarcasm in suggesting a choice of lady's favours, and as the crestfallen artist vanished a footman entered and announced the Duke of Newcastle.

Lincoln was surprised, and only moderately pleased at this unexpected honour, but the Duke was in capital humour then. The Ranelagh affair had already come to his ears, and he quizzed and complimented Lincoln on his appearance in a new character; called him scuffler and mohawk, a handsome cut-throat, and vowed that he should resign his place at Court and employ his valour by raising a regiment against the French.

"But you are a philosopher as well as a warrior, Harry," the Duke continued gaily, "now that you should go about in sables, with your stocking down. Has our heart already recovered the little mishap? See now how inconsolable is the nymph of the yellow hair. Plainly it was for

yourself, not for your acres and my poor dukedom, that she languished, the minx! See how she takes it to heart! She is in despair, by-the-way. She pines, she takes poison, bids adieu to the world, and buries herself alive down by Towcester, don't she. Oh! a good fairy was praying for you, Harry, my nephew, and you look uncommonly well, sir, in that smart apricot suit; that absurd attire becomes your lean and gentlemanly figure, you coxcomb—French, no doubt, with these *galons* and fallals. You will be a credit to me after my death—the handsomest duke of the line. How lucky you missed the trap these clever women were craftily setting for you! And you have to thank me for the escape."

"I am sorry for her," murmured Lincoln, with averted eyes.

"And I for old Carteret, 'pon my soul, though I hate him," rejoined the Duke. "At his years, with his experience and his reputation, after exhausting every passion and folly and vice, to tumble into a bottomless gulf of folly! 'Tis sublime, supreme!

another instance of his versatile genius though," he added with a laugh.

"It is inconceivable that she could bring herself to it."

"Oh, you are very young yet. Consider, my nephew, how very much in love my Lord is—what flames! He kept the Cabinet waiting half-an-hour yesterday to read aloud one of her billets-doux. When we old gentlemen once take fire again we burn off like tinder: besides, we are always irresistible—understand that: the lady could not prevent it. There was my Lord's eloquence, and my Lady Pomfret's prayers. Besides, the brother Lempster is to be provided for shortly, when the estate is squandered. So with filial duty, as well as family and fraternal feelings, and disinterested affection besides, all urging her together, how could she resist? By the Lord, she will make Carteret a splendid wife! When my lady comes to contest domestic privileges with the mother-in-law, the fair ones between them will find him so much to do that I look for a vacancy on the Treasury Bench

—a not impossible chance, and let our prayers be offered up for his happiness, for when Carteret goes out, somebody else that I know of expects to come in.

"However, to-day there is business to be done, and I came here about it," continued the Duke assuming a serious and important air. "Henry has come up to town on purpose to arrange the preliminaries of your marriage; we have an appointment with the lawyers at four o'clock about it. You may as well join us, and go into the matter at once; there is no further cause of delay; and it will look better if you volunteer it yourself. My coach is waiting at the other side of the Park; we can walk through and see the folk there. I want air deucedly. Over-worked as we have been, an hour's breathing time is all I can afford myself. Harry, I advise you to settle down in the country as a humdrum squire after your marriage, and leave state affairs to us old fellows, who are good for nothing else; for it is not every one who can recommence his honey-mooning afresh at three-score, like the first minister: such vitality in a grandfather is exceptional. Oh!

when I think of it, a widower of his age, provided besides with plenty of managing women to look after him, to be snapped up by a professional sharperess like this Countess! Egad! Lincoln, what an escape we had all of us! What a disaster for the whole family—what a caricature—if you had fallen a prey to the schemes of these hungry Pomfrets!"

In a few minutes afterwards the uncle and nephew sallied forth, arm-and-arm. Although at this time complaint was made that the rabble and meaner sort began to invade the sanctity of the Park, and intrude themselves betwixt the wind and the promenading nobility there, still the crowd which assembled in the Mall was mainly composed of well-dressed fashionable folk. Birds of the gaudiest plumage in hoops and head-dresses; gentlemen of birth and breeding, fops and macaroni, the best matches and finest fortunes in England, were to be found there, sauntering in pairs or lolling affectedly on the benches, displaying limbs and figure, or standing in quizzing groups apart, ogling the passing stream. Such

groups of loungers found plenty to observe. It was of such importance then that one's toes should turn out, that ruffles should fall gracefully, that the hat should balance under the arm, and skirts, male as well as female, bend and set into prescribed folds. The country gentleman in his French suit, fresh from the posturings of a Court dancing-master, felt his practised manners clownish, and his tight stockinged legs stiff and awkward, on passing these batteries of satire. Even ladies of established ton faced them nervously. If a head-dress should be too high, or one's bodice too low, or the vermilion cheek, or the clocked stocking too glaringly shown, some lynx-eyed critic there would be sure to spy it out, and glib tongues were ready enough to convey the discovery in a simpering whisper.

Horace Walpole was always dangling his long legs on the Park benches at this time, and often the central figure in one of those dangerous groups, as his connoisseurship in dress was known, and his reputation for sarcasm was already spreading.

Walpole was regarded as a dangerous man, and, as luck would have it, there he stood now, quizzing, glass in hand, as Lord Lincoln's handsome face appeared through the crowd. Walpole turned round quickly as if to address his old friend then. In truth, he was anxious to observe for himself how Lincoln bore the Carteret news; but seeing the Duke beside him, merely nodded, turning away with a shrug. He would not run the chance of being spoken to by his grace.

Lincoln was laced and starched into the stiffest freak of fashion. His hair was French, and it was his own hair. His skirt, short as a modish scissors could shape it, puffed out admirably into the inexorable melon-shape in vogue; but his nether garments were shorter than the skirt; so short that from a back view of his figure his legs looked lanky and strange. It was a trying fashion for elderly, or fat, or bow-legged beaux. The difficulty was to move at all without appearing awkward and ungainly. But while in Paris Lincoln had taken lessons from the famous minuet-step

maker, Marcel; so that his legs were safe, and his stockings, clocked with gold, were the admiration of the Mall. Besides, his limbs were well taught by nature as well as by the famous French posturing-master; his instep was firm, and the carriage of his person vigorous and graceful. A blue satin shoulder-knot fluttered in his ear. He had decidedly the *bel air*, as his hat, with the scarlet plume, went off to many a smile and ogle, while frizzled, scented and modish he passed down admiring ranks of marrying or marriageable dames of high degree. Painted lips parted, and eyes bright with hope and welcome gladdened at his approach. Even fops of supreme fashion, men who carried three snuff-boxes and slept with heads in scented curl-papers, and never looked with interest at anything but the looking-glass, turned on their crimson heels to stare after Lincoln as he passed, and stood grave with envy, dangling their clouded canes.

Decidedly the best-dressed gentleman in St. James's Park, Lincoln was probably himself

conscious of the effect of his appearance. His uncle was so altogether, as he swung on his arm with his usual vulgar consequential air; but the Duke gave a sudden twinge to the arm and Lincoln, turning at the signal, lifted his hat hurriedly, blushing in his awkward haste, as a lady passed by close—so near that his bending shoulder-knot brushed her laces; and the pencil touches on her eyebrows, the mealy texture of the resplendent cheek, the angry flush on her brow, the staring scorn of her glance, all came up together into his eyes, as in a blaze of apparel all ribbons and roses, in the lowest of dresses, the loftiest of head-dresses, followed by two laced and spangled lackeys with gilt knobbed poles, the one carrying her fan, the other her bouquet, a circle of skirt filling surrounding space, a troop of gentlemen of the Carteret faction forming escort, and supported on the arm of the Duke of Bolton, an elderly fop with a flaxen wig, Henrietta Countess of Pomfret sailed majestically by, and, in answer to Lord Lincoln's clumsy salute, drew her

padded figure erect and cut him dead. There were plenty of eyes present to witness it, and Lincoln's face flushed up to the ears.

"Bravo! Egad! I admire her spirit, though Carteret may yet find it too strong for his taste—the spirit," chuckled his grace. "He has one termagant in the house already; two will be a luxury; that is having honey a sauce to sugar, peppering one's mustard with a vengeance. Did you observe old Bolton? his curls? Every year as old as I am, and led a very hard life to boot—yet how well he looks, Harry! I must discover the secret of his peruke. Ah! yonder is Mr. Montagu, a friend of yours; a pert-looking young fellow with a good opinion of himself, I dare say; and behind another spark of the same feather—Sir Robert's son Horace, a literary coxcomb and—prig. I detest these people. These gentry survey the world through a spy-glass, and think society exists but for their use and pleasure," added the Duke as Lincoln caught Walpole's eye directed on himself. George Montagu slipped a word into his ear,

and at the same moment they both burst out laughing.

The Duke suspected that these irreverent youths were laughing at himself, and scowled. Lincoln thought that he was the object of their mirth, and blushed. For the first time since they had come to England, Marcel's legs felt awkward as they lounged away, while the Countess of Pomfret wheeled briskly round and rustled up to Walpole and Montagu with a beaming defiance in her face.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRD IN THE BUSH ONCE MORE.

AFTER the interview with the family lawyers, the Duke embraced his nephew. He was the most demonstrative of dukes. His lips and hands were equally employed when things went well or went ill with him. He kissed for sorrow or for joy, or he kissed for sympathy. He patted and gasped, and cried aloud in the midst of his hugging and fondling. He even kissed the family attorney, a very respectable man, whose father was a butler, and who nearly fainted off at the honour.

Consider what self-denial was contained in this habit. If the greatest enemy he had on earth were to come to the Duke on the most unpleasant business, say a petition for money—and Newcastle disliked a demand of that nature as much as any miserly

cormorant who ever sat on the treasury bench—the first action of his grace would be to cast his arms about his neck. Conceive any illustrious statesman in our day doing it! Imagine the spokesman of a deputation coming to any cabinet minister, in the Exchequer, or the Home Office, shall we say, for some benevolent project, and that, instead of receiving him in the usual official manner, the right honourable gentleman were to kiss him on the spot!

Picture the graceful scene. First the gleam of the kindly official eyes, then the hearty clasp—the paroxysm, followed by the start of the horror-stricken and bewildered visitor! How surprised we should be to read of it next morning in the papers, and how very much that lucky spokesman would under certain circumstances be envied by us all!

"So, so, Harry, everything is settled at last," said the Duke, mopping his eyes as he settled into the seat of his coach, and Lincoln stood by taking his leave. "After your fortnight's stay at Court

you can run down to Esher and see Catherine. I shall arrange about the patent of the dukedom; that will be readily managed. I have only to mention it to his Majesty. A great compliment to me, to you. His Majesty is very good. God bless his Majesty! How do you like my brother Henry? You will get on well together, I'm sure. He is very clever; everybody likes him. He approves of you personally for a son-in-law—I noticed that. You will be the prettiest bridegroom of the year in England, sir; the most to be envied, but not the most famous—not at all! My Lord Carteret surpasses you there. He eclipses you; his affair is far more interesting than yours. Let down the sash—that will do. These are new liveries. I had the pattern from Auverquesque. Green and scarlet—pretty. Adieu! au revoir. Bless you!" and the Duke's coach galloped away.

Was Lincoln equally well pleased with the interview with the lawyers? While it lasted he had been fastidious and affected towards Mr. Pelham. The manner of the latter had been pompous or

patronising, or Lincoln fancied that it had. He appeared to take everything so much as a matter of course, and was so sublimely remote from suspecting that any human being could regard marriage with his daughter in the light of a sacrifice.

Then he spoke of his family; and its alliances; as if next to being born a Pelham the most fortunate lot was to become connected by marriage with that illustrious line. Did Lincoln care for the Pelhams or their alliances? He was simply going to make a marriage of arrangement, because it had been so decreed by his uncle and his fate, and if its advantages were not already presupposed, he would not be there consenting to perform it.

In truth, Lincoln felt that the meshes of matrimony were now being drawn very close about him, and his characteristic dislike of irrevocable steps took the old alarm. Besides, a certain reaction from the excitement of his recent mode of life had already set in, a somewhat desponding mood, which made him especially indisposed to contemplate an ordeal

demanding so much nerve and energy as matrimony did.

Then Lady Pomfret had cut him in the Park, and people had been looking on. Walpole and Montagu, he felt sure, had laughed at him in public. Trifling slights had a grave effect on Lincoln's sensitive vanity, and it was clear that Walpole did not appreciate his wisdom in giving up the handsomest woman in Europe. So his peculiar genius was again awake working in the old groove, and tormenting him briskly as ever. Besides, Lord Carteret's affair supplied him with fresh materials for mental aggravation; his uncle's argument against Lady Sophia Fermor had in substance amounted to this: "that considering his rank and worldly advantages, and, above all, his future political position, she was not good enough to make him a proper mate." Yet here was the Prime Minister of England about to make her his wife—a man of the first rank by birth, and wealth, and also by right of his unquestioned talents and of the distinction which had

attended every circumstance of his career. Yet every one applauded Lord Carteret's choice. "What then was this ambition?" Lincoln asked himself; "this shallow phantom, to which he had, perhaps, immolated his happiness? Was it even so necessary that he should become a statesman at all, or ever approach politics? His uncle was a great statesman, and what profit had he from it but work and worry? Lord Carteret was a great statesman, and found solace from the cares of office in the bottle."

In a word, that which was slipping away through his fingers began to exercise the old fascination on his fancy, and the near and certain object to wear the sombre hues of monotony which for him always invested every object realized. Insensibly he began again to harbour chilly feelings towards that loving heiress of Esher to whom his fickle faith was plighted.

It seems such a breach of contract on the part of providence or of fortune that a man who is rich, and noble, and handsome, and young, shall have

anything whatever to trouble him. There are individuals who are constituted happy by nature and by birthright, as there are others who, according to the visible operation of unseen or of imperfectly understood moral laws, are expected to be self-denying and miserable throughout the course of their humble lives—contentedly miserable. And we, placidly looking on, are pleased to see that both fulfil the conditions of their respective allotments. Lord Lincoln was much distressed in contemplating all that he was evidently suffering; he enumerated the array of moods and spasms through which he had passed, and brought out a severe verdict—not against himself; for if much of his pain was owing to his own fault, that was nothing to the purpose. It was only in the case that he was undergoing positive suffering, and that was in itself improper. What right had he to suffer? What an invasion of the prerogative which both he and the world agreed belonged justly to him by birthright or by gift right!

He sat alone at the opera one night, pondering

over this perverse subject. And being in the worst spirits and temper, he naturally found the entertainment there indifferent. Everything was dull and faulty. The house wanted the Parisian glitter: the women ill-dressed and English; the boxes full of draughts; the violins out of tune, and he out of tune for the fiddling. There was nothing entertaining to look at or listen to, and he was in the act of rising to go away, when his opera-glass sighted some ladies in a box on the first tier. They were members of the Carteret family, he recognised Lady Dysart among them. And at the same moment, a conversation in the next box reached his ears. The voices were familiar; they were his own associates; but he drew back behind the curtain, wishing to remain unseen. This was during the interval of the performance, while the words came to him distinctly.

"Yonder is Lady Dysart. How cross she looks to-night, or how ill-dressed!" said Lord Robert Sutton. "Is it the dingy box or the bad lighting? But her beauty is declining—and she has, or had,

a fair share of it to lose. I remember her first drawing-room. A very fine woman once, but going fast—a peevish expression, too, is growing on her —the Granville lip."

"But 'tis her specialty to look cross, and the latest fashion; besides, it conveys the expression of elegance in vogue. All well-bred women practise it now. Lady Dysart's look is an admitted success."

"This droning Giganti would depress anybody's spirits; no wonder! this is the tenth repetition," answered Sutton sleepily: "even the Pompeati is weary of it. Oh for some intelligence in the management, and some light in the house! I shall stop my subscription if things don't improve."

"But Lady Dysart ought to look more cheerful, considering what is in store for her on Tuesday," said Mr. Winnington, lowering his glass; "considering the handsome step-mother she is to obtain then; for on Tuesday she becomes the daughter of my Lady Pomfret's daughter."

"Talking of daughters, Carteret has been cut by all his own, I learn."

"No wonder! It is hard for Lady Dysart, who has ever ranked as a beauty on her own account, to be outshone by a mother twelve years her junior. She might be excused for looking peevish; think how very near the day is."

"On Tuesday, did you say?"

"Yes, and Carteret, the old hero, does not lose courage in the least. I commend his daring; although the first orator in the House, I envy his courage more than his oratory," said Lord Robert Sutton.

"But he is no orator in his own house; he doesn't open his lips there; he is afraid to do it," said Winnington; "and as for his courage, I think the lady deserves credit for some, for facing the old mother in her den. She tipples, the old dame does, 'tis said—carries a flask of aqua vitæ in the cushion of her chair; so Carteret's habit is hereditary."

"Are all his other habits so?" inquires Sutton.

"No matter for his habits, he will reform now. Sixty, and a second wife, and she a jewel in her

teens; any man may mend at his age, under these conditions—the lady will lure him back to sobriety and virtue, no doubt."

"Three score. It sounds late for virtue; and as for sobriety—moonshine."

"But he wants an heir male of his body besides; and whatever Carteret wants he will have. He must have an heir, his only son being out of his wits. There must be a crop of Carterets, a future Lord Granville, of decent parts and behaviour, is a constitutional necessity. My Lord and Lady Pomfret have settled that between them."

"The decent behaviour must also be a hope of the future then; this generation will not see it," said Mr. Winnington.

"Oh! this is a woman of spirit, and Carteret will turn over another leaf."

"Surely a double marriage is turn over enough for any man, even a minister, and if Lady Sophia be the rod which chasteneth"—

"Then he will kiss the rod," said Lord Robert Sutton; "Carteret will embrace this opportunity

of reformation. On Tuesday, did you say? how very brisk."

"And the old Granville swears not to live to see the day. How jolly for the bride if she only kept her word!"

"What a hornet's nest the daughters will provide their new mamma! what a couch of roses—and thorns! But Carteret, I dare say, vows to keep sober for the ceremony," lisps Winnington.

Here a fresh entry into the box, and the familiar voice of Captain Keats calls out—

"Have none of you heard the news? It is all over with Carteret's marriage; the thing is simply at an end."

"What, a quarrel?"

"An explosion!"

"In that case, I wager old Granville applied the match," said Lord Robert Sutton.

"The bride is dangerously ill; every physician in town is on his legs about it."

"A fever?"

"No hope of her whatever."

"Iphigenia sick as the fatal hour approaches."

"Or poisoned by the beldam," suggested Winnington.

"The marriage is, at all events, deferred; it is the last thing thought of now," answered Keats, "and Carteret, in his despair, would doubtless commit some desperate action becoming the occasion, but an opportune attack of gout, brought on by mental uneasiness, providentially confines him to his chair."

"A sympathetic attack—gout and love. Lord! how very much in love my lord must be to catch the gout by it. But he might have found a shorter path to gout than by way of love; if gout was his object he has earned that long ago on his own merits. How if they should now expire of their mutual pangs! Come to sicken and die—the pretty fools—and be buried under a rose-bush in one grave like the lovers in a ballad," added Winnington, again surveying the house through his opera-glass. "There goes stout Lady Bancroft, dressed *à l'enfant* as usual; nothing on her; and

that nothing gauze. We shall have her naked as Cupid next."

"No elderly body as a right to appear as Cupid now but Lord Carteret; 'tis a copyright character with him," said Lord Robert Sutton.

Here the curtain rose, and the music commenced. What a false accompaniment these first tender strains made to the whirl of Lincoln's thoughts! Lady Sophia ill—in danger! The words kept singing in his ears, and drowned the harmonies of the orchestra.

Here was an incident which in an instant changed the fixed impressions of his mind.

He had resolved to regard her as a hard unwomanly creature, eager and aspiring, willing to barter her rare beauty for a mean ambition—merely an artful member of a designing family; but this strange news came with fresh illuminating power—and he saw everything at once in changed colours. It was no longer the woman resolute in her pride, availing herself of the chance of a detestable marriage, but a delicate girl whose heart

was breaking from the shock to her affections. A victim who had been coerced into this marriage by her vulgar mother. How unjust he had been! He had judged her deficient in feeling, and now she was lying ill, on her death-bed, perhaps, from very excess of it.

For this attack might be her death. Creatures less delicate than she had died of heart-break and sorrow. And then, on whose hands would rest the guilt of it? Unconsciously Lincoln glanced at his hands; they were buried in ribands and ruffles, and sparkling with gems. She might be at her death agony this moment, while he, frizzled and powdered, sat there listening to the prattle of fops and the twanging of violins.

He quitted the box abruptly as the Pompeati advanced to the footlights; there was a hiss at his interruption of the charmer's notes, but he did not mind; then the box-door banged behind him, and he strode along the galleries and staircases to the entrance.

The lackeys and footmen on the landing stared

as the young earl stepped into the black slanting rain that scoured under the pillars of the portico. He paused to look round for his people, who were regaling themselves in a neighbouring pot-house; but as he stood gazing into the night, two figures alighted from a hackney-coach, and mounted the steps into the theatre. One of these, stopping to throw off his cloak under the sconces of the entrance, with a sort of start recognised Lord Lincoln.

He was a man of abdominal shape, of the elderly spark species: with a heavy bloated face; and a hat, fringed with tarnished lace and swan's-down, cocked over his ear; on his fat forefinger a carbuncle gleamed; in his throat a diamond of doubtful quality lightened dingily in the lamp light. His sword, of the rapier kind, longer than the ornamental one worn by gentlemen, was wrapt at the hilt in a business-like fashion with a whip-cord thong: this was Dawson, the man with whom Lincoln and his friends had had the scuffle at Ranelagh. It was plain he was in liquor.

"Damme! some people block up the doorway as

if the house belonged to them, and no other gentlemen were to be convenienced but themselves," he said at once in a loud tone, advancing with a knock-kneed swagger, his fat calves brushing together.

Then the other figure turned round; Lord Lempster! He would have come forward also, but his yielding limbs made it impossible. Plainly he was quite drunk, incapable of either speech or movement; and stood scowling vacantly with his hand on the baluster for support.

"Zooks! I am a plain gentleman, but no man shall put a slight on me, or insult my friend, without answering it," said Dawson, strutting forward.

"Surely, sir, I have done neither."

"None of your fopling airs with me, my lord; I'll not take them from you. You don't know your man, to put on airs with me, as good a gentleman as yourself. I have been looking after you since. For my lord yonder, my friend, has to complain of your lordship's conduct. And never friend came to Jack

Dawson for succour, with purse or steel, faith! without finding it."

"Your friend. Oh! Lord Lempster is your friend," and with a shrug Lincoln turned his back. "Sir, if you bear a message to me it must be at a more becoming time and place, and at a period when your principal is sober, and you have laid aside this swaggering humour;" and whisking round his cloak, Lincoln strode in his silk stockings into the wet street and darkness. A cheer from the link boys, chairmen, and surrounding rabble ringing in his ears.

It was a relief in the horror and whirl of his thoughts to get free into the wild weather and black night away from the lights and music. There was Lady Sophia lying, perhaps, on her death-bed, while her brutal brother was scouring the town with tipsy swaggerers. All the events of the past came up to his mind at once in their order — every incident connected with Lady Sophia, with their joint lives—the first meeting in Florence, the early passages of love, his first

impressions, the fervor of his declarations, the parting, the revived attachment in England, then the final disaster. What wonder if her heart should break, and death itself come to rescue her from this hideous marriage? Lincoln was all a-glow in admiration of her character, viewed in this new light. It might have been in accordance with the pride of an outraged woman that she should at first seize the opportunity of revenge by accepting Lord Carteret, but how consistent with her maiden delicacy that she should fail in the execution of the sacrifice, and faint away, as it were, on the very steps of the altar!

Lincoln's eyes were now open to the enormity of his own conduct, and he did not shrink from accepting his share of responsibility. He had deserted her; committed a crime—a folly. He admitted that in terms. In his intense anxiety for self he had overleaped the end and aim of selfishness, and clumsily shattered the fabric of his own happiness; for it was plain that she was the wife which heaven had selected for him; his conscience

became suddenly illuminated. Was it not clear that his character had deteriorated ever since their rupture. How had he employed his time? What pursuits occupied him? Who were his associates since?

He had been weak, foolish, heartless; influenced by shallow arguments and false counsels in a matter which was not open to argument; and where counsel of any kind was an impertinence; yet, what a brother-in-law Lord Lempster would be! How could a man of sense and figure agree to make such a connection? But exactly as his reflections took this characteristic turn backward, the personal disadvantages of being exposed to the weather in such flimsy attire became apparent, and hailing a hackney-coach, he drove with all speed homewards; while his thoughts kept still mounting to the exalted region of spasms and desires.

One single hope remained to him—a possible opportunity of reparation to her, and of restoration to happiness for himself.

This time he decided to be courageous in

adopting it at once; not another night should pass over until he gave proof to himself of the thoroughness of his resolution; so on reaching home, he immediately divested himself of his damp finery, had refreshment served in his dressing-room, then with his drooping spirits and exhausted physical tone renovated, he sat, surrounded by tapers, at his desk before a blazing fire, far into the night, engaged in the composition of two letters to the old addresses—one to the Countess of Pomfret, the other to her daughter. Ardent, impassioned, incoherent specimens of composition they doubtless were, but Lincoln did not measure the excesses of language into which his feelings hurried him, if his meaning was only clearly expressed. He sternly set to the task of completing both letters that night, and achieved it. Not until each missive was folded and sealed and the addresses written out, did he seek a sleepless couch. To-morrow was to bring certain appalling explanations; and all through the night Lincoln tasted the horrors of an inevitable interview with his uncle.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH LORD LINCOLN IS AGAIN VERY BRAVE.

To escape from the criticism of the town, Lady Sophia had done everything to hasten on the marriage. Once Lady Carteret, her position would be defined, and more tolerable; she might calculate on some degree of mental repose then.

Perhaps she did not love Lord Carteret very much, but that was not necessary for marriage. It was only shepherds and shepherdesses in a pastoral or an opera, and sometimes tradesfolk and artisans in real life, who married for love; scarcely any other class in England; certainly not persons of rank; nor did marriages of romance invariably turn out such successful speculations either. As if it mattered who one married?—a husband was an establishment merely, and one man, supposing him equally rich,

well-bred and powerful, was as good as another, on condition that he looked like a gentleman. Otherwise men were all alike, selfish, good for nothing, false—eminently false. Some women were designed by nature to be the slaves and worshippers of one of these gods of clay, and were made mercifully blind to their defects; but for a woman of intelligence there were more agreeable occupations in the world, and a nobler aim in life than—happiness. That, in itself an overrated state, was not the absolute necessity of existence that foolish young people imagined. Did not an immense class of handsome, well-dressed, and well-bred women live and die, go to Court, and to the opera, and enjoy life very well without it?

The preparations for the marriage, the bustle of dress and congratulations, kept her hands and mind occupied; there was a resource in that. If she could only keep from thinking at all until the ceremony was over! and constant occupation was the best way of vulcanising one's rebellious thoughts, and reducing the mind to a blank.

So Lady Sophia held up bravely until the very eve of the day fixed for the ceremony, when the mere woman part of her gave way, and she broke down hopelessly. She fainted off in the drawing-room before dinner, and passed the night in a state of semi-consciousness; afterwards an attack of fever set in, to the consternation of her family and friends.

It was no exaggeration to say that for some days her life was in real danger, and Lord Carteret exhibited his distress by having an acute attack of the gout, as we have related; but his grief expressed itself in other forms.

He wore a dolorous visage, and pestered his secretaries and visitors with recital of his distress. At all hours, day and night, messengers were on foot. Old Lady Granville, whose hopes were raised by this illness, lost all patience at his behaviour, and declared that her clever son had lost his head. With his limbs wrapped in flannel, he passed the time inditing ardent love letters, and exhibiting the excess of his distress to every one

sufficiently in his confidence to submit to the infliction. His political colleagues declared that the business of the nation was at a stand because Lord Carteret would turn to nothing save elegiacs on Lady Sophia's misfortune, or panegyrics on her beauty.

Yet was this at a time when the burning interest of politics was at white heat; when the business of the nation, as they phrased it, was a secondary affair to the business of party; and the advancement of party meant for every man place, pension, corruption and—self. How very different from our epoch! Yet the fierce worldliness, the dazzling wickedness of that time is all on the surface, and bewilders, blinds one. Surely never before did human nature appear in such a varied light of contrasts; so reckless, devoted, honourable, chivalrous, also so paltry and mean. One might take portraits out of the history of the time so illustrative of its character and individuality as to be photographs, which in a different moral atmosphere, or in another political climate,

would be impossible. Lord Carteret was as distinctly an individual one as any. Lord Hervey was another portrait of the eighteenth century, still more perfectly belonging to it. Imagine a Hervey possible in any other age. Thackeray declares that the character frightens him; that slim handsome figure with a languid smile and flaxen hair, and his nickname—Lord Fanny—because of his mild air and sweet womanish face. There is a sparkling passage in "the letters," which puts him before us in most characteristic shape.

Hervey, then in his first youth, happened to be present at an assembly at Lord Cobham's. Walpole shows him hanging over the arm of a chair talking with some ladies, dangling his hat in a fine lackadaisical way—a Vandyck figure, a Hervey—for that air of breeding was hereditary with all of the race.

As he stood thus, some gentlemen looking on, envious or jealous perhaps of his supercilious carriage, propose an innocent wager, in accordance, we must suppose, with certain habits in vogue.

Lord Cobham himself lays a guinea that he will insult Hervey on the spot, and that he will not resent it. Ignorant as yet of the spirit which lurked behind those mild, girlish eyes, Lord Cobham crosses the room to where his guest stood lolling and dangling his hat, then stops and spits into it. Hervey does not move; he merely looks up and says, "Have you any further occasion for my hat?" and continues his simpering talk with the ladies.

Presently, however, he slips from the room, steps into a chair, sends Lord Cobham a challenge, with a note inquiring as to whether first to address himself to his lordship, or to his friend Nugent, the other party to the wager.

The duellist has passed into Hades. But how would such a mortal affront as that be dealt with in our time? what sequence would come of it?

Let us place a modern example beside that picture of departed life and manners, for some future Walpole to hang his notes on; an historic

figure, too, quite worthy of his pen; something that will have interest for remote posterity, or some remote historian perhaps—Lord Macaulay's unhappy New Zealander it may be, when that mystic personage shall arrive in town to fulfil his prophetic mission, and execute a certain sketch of a broken arch. If that accomplished tourist should turn out to be an antiquarian as well as an artist, he will be specially interested in the anecdote, being a New Zealander (for it is a colonial story), also as being authentic, which is another remarkable feature in histories of this kind. Here it is:

An eminent British statesman, happily still living, began his career of distinction in one of our colonies, and, in the course of his uprise, happened to indulge one of his many natural endowments, a perverse and peevish temper, at the expense of another gentleman there; who retaliated by taking a horsewhip, walking down to the house of legislature—it was in the colonies, remember—and thrashing the aged and eminent personage referred

to. This was very bad; but redress was to hand. He availed himself of the opportunities which the law afforded, and put the aggressor in the Queen's Bench. Fancy the pale-faced Lord Fanny taking revenge in a court of justice for a horsewhip laid across his sloping shoulders! But this was in another time, and in one of the colonies, we repeat. However, the machinery of colonial justice was in such a lumbering way, or so much out of gear, or the unpopularity of the eminent personage himself was so great, that justice could not succour him. At all events, it did not. The Queen's Bench, while establishing the guilt of the horsewhipping gentleman, decided that the horsewhipped got no more than his deserts, and by connivance of the judges the culprit escaped adequate punishment. This was the judgment of the court, and public opinion in the locality was so lax as to approve the decision.

Naturally indignant, the victim of this double outrage promptly resigns his seat in the native legislature, and decides to return to

England; being horsewhipped home, as it were. But a third colonial compliment was paid him before departure; none of the transport companies would give him a passage in any of their ships. They would no more let him on board, they said, than the cholera; and he ultimately found it necessary to hire a ship on his own account to transport his person to this country. Unhappily, that ship with its precious freight arrived in safety. The distinguished passenger in due time obtains a seat in the imperial legislature, where, fortunately, there are no persons standing with horsewhips in the lobby of the House to chastise members who may happen very richly to deserve it, nor do gentlemen wear rapiers on their hips, now as in Lord Fanny's wicked time.

Therefore, safe alike from whip or steel, the distinguished individual has been following the natural bent of his evil inclination ever since, enjoying that fame which he has so augmented and enhanced, that if he were now perchance to return to the scene of his early legislative experiments, it is

hard to say what compliment might not be paid him, probably the guns of the port of that particular colony would let go and the ship on her arrival be scuttled in the roadstead.

However, Lincoln rose on the morning after the opera in a state of high mental excitement, which was no wise diminished by discovering that his uncle had posted down the night before to Claremont, to confer with some prominent political personages who were bidden there. This he had confidentially from Wilmot, the secretary, who added that "It was also possible his grace might go on to Esher before returning to town."

The very name of Esher was enough for Lincoln, the last place he would think of visiting; it put all idea of proceeding to Claremont out of his head.

As he lay back in his chariot, with his feet on the hot-water jars that had been placed there—for he was chilly and feverish from the wetting overnight, or from the hot and cold of his sensations—it occurred to him that the most effective plan

would be to drive straight to Lady Pomfret's, and either deliver his letters into her hands, or, better, express himself in words, even in the wild and incoherent manner which would be the very likely effect of his present excitement. He drove past the house to see if his heart failed him: and it did. The windows on the street were darkened. A coach and a chair were at the door, with the usual attendants: these were the doctor's people. A chairman had his nose in a measure of ale, while an itinerant pot-boy stood by with his tray.

What misery! that of all persons alive he could not venture even to make inquiries for her health! But as he passed the house the sense of unfitness was evident to himself; and that was a new discovery, for hitherto his own desires had appeared to be the only essential considerations in any given case; he had never been guided by any other: nor recognised the existence of circumstances outside the circle of his own control. So exceeding was this conceit, that to change or to direct the destiny of his life at any time, ap-

peared to be only a matter of personal sensation with himself, the primary difficulty always was to discover what he desired. After that, considerations connected with other people's intentions were unimportant; but, for the first time, he now began to realise that his own inclination was not an absolutely omnipotent influence, and also that a visit to Lady Pomfret, under existing circumstances, with Lady Sophia, perhaps, on her death-bed, would be regarded as a gross indelicacy, if not an outrage. It was odd that other people's feelings were sometimes to be regarded as well as his own.

Then there was the old necessity again. He became immediately oppressed with the necessity of at least informing his uncle of the step which he meditated, if he did not intend to consult him upon it. So he decided to write at once, and despatch a special messenger to Claremont with the letter; but if his uncle should have gone on to Esher, then the premature news might get out among the Pelhams, and that before he knew

where he was, or what step he intended to take next.

In extreme perplexity, Lincoln returned home, but fate seemed playing with his impatience, for on alighting from his coach he became conscious of a real illness; a chill had seized him in the carriage, which no wrappers could keep away. He was obliged to take to his bed, and suffer himself to be dosed and blistered and blooded according to the abominably energetic practice of surgery in those days.

What an odd coincidence! Here were the three prominent personages of this history struck down in illness together—Lady Sophia, Lord Carteret, and Lord Lincoln. In one sense, however, it was a consoling circumstance for the latter, as he reflected that Lady Sophia's illness, as well as the infirmity of her gouty lover, were securities that the question of marriage should be deferred to some safely remote period. He did not calculate on a speedy recovery in the case of Lady Sophia, or estimate the recuperative power of love acting

on the seasoned constitution of Lord Carteret. Meanwhile the Duke had already returned to town; some days had passed, when, haggard and feeble, in the first stages of convalescence, Lord Lincoln stepped from his chair, and was assisted up the steps of the great house in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The Duke was closeted with two famous captains of debate, and could not see him, the confidential secretary whispered, with an important face; but Lincoln was heedless of the proprieties, and pushed through into the inner sanctuary, startling the three conspirators there by his abrupt intrusion.

The Duke stared at his pale and unexpected face; and the two allies, seeing the intruder hold his ground, presently rose from their seats, offered cold excuses, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XI.

AND LORD CARTERET IS MADE VERY HAPPY.

It happened that the Duke was in extreme joy at the prosperous aspect of an intrigue which promised to place him again on the throne of party and after a few introductory sentences burst forth in voluble exclamations of joy at the anticipated triumph. . Never had the fortunes of the Pelhams appeared more in the ascendant. The machinery of cabal had worked smoothly; all the wires and springs had been so cleverly set that the result was certain. Every precaution had been taken; all the conspirators were united and self-reliant. One rival had had a promise of a peerage; another was bought with a slice of political power; a riband and the patronage of a huge northern

county for a third; a fourth was to be brought into the Cabinet.

Every man's hand was engaged in the work of getting itself deep into the pocket of the nation, and every species of intrigue was busily employed; the ministry had already been mined, the match would be presently applied, and then—a dazzling prospect—out of the ruin of the explosion would appear the exalted house of Pelham towering in power and majesty.

But Lincoln broke in on the old man's vehemence.

"I have to speak on a subject more important to both of us than the glory of your house, or the fall of a ministry," he said.

The Duke looked at him curiously. "Something about your marriage, Harry? You are impatient; but things can't be done in a shot. I am losing no time with his Majesty about the patent."

"I have discovered my true inclination about this marriage, and I cannot consent to it. I cannot marry Catherine Pelham. That is the whole,

in a word. I cannot, and I have come to tell you so seriously and finally."

"Then you will not marry her?" said the Duke.

"I shall not—whatever you may think, whatever you may urge. Not to become king of England would I do it."

"It is settled, so far. You do not marry her. Afterwards—I am curious to learn what follows." The Duke drew an imaginary line with his finger on a sheet of official paper on the desk. "That is ruled then; you do not marry Catherine. Well? Well, Harry," continued the Duke, with the breathless volubility which never failed him, "I am impatient to hear more. I presume you have measured the consequences of this refusal, and accept the responsibility of them. No, it is not that. Harry, I want to know what has come between us two. On my part, I say that nothing shall ever come between us. Marry or not, as you please, nothing can change my sentiments towards you; even the loss of your duty, your affection, your esteem could not do it. Why do you come to speak

in this tone to me, my nephew? What strange spirit moves you? It is as unnatural as cruel. For you are the heir to my rank and fortune, whatever happens. No matter how you choose to proceed in this affair or in any other, rest assured that I shall not change towards you; I shall not cease to labour for your happiness. If I appeared to threaten you before, I was not serious in it. I confess that now; my affection compels me to make the admission. Do you despise me for my candour now, or for what may, if you please, be called my duplicity then—the duplicity of affection? Patience! Have compassion on the extremity of my feelings—on my weakness for you. Do not trade upon it. Everything that the old man possesses is yours, undiminished, undivided. This ruptured marriage is a blow to me, I confess; but I shall find it easier to bear than that death-blow, the loss of your affection."

Lincoln stood by stiff and motionless. The Duke had no resource but to grasp the pocket-handkerchief ever at hand for an emergency; to bend

his injured and venerable head and begin to sob.

But he quickly perceived that even this did not melt his nephew. Insensibility was the last quality he expected to find in a nature which had ever been so ductile, so influenced by consideration and respect for himself. The instantaneous discovery was so unexpected, that he not only lost his discretion but his temper at it, and, dexterously drying up his eyes, exclaimed in a petulant tone, strangely at variance with the preceding whimper—

"There must be a codicil to so sensible a resolution; you will explain it further, I presume. You must have good reasons, surely, for this heartless jilting of your gentle and too affectionate cousin. The motives must indeed be strong which could impel you to a course as unfeeling as it is monstrously dishonourable and unworthy. You cannot attempt to set up any sort of defence, eh? What do you intend to do afterwards?"

"I cannot help it now; my chief error was want

of firmness in the beginning; and misery has been the result. I am deeply touched at your generosity. I regret with my whole soul the unfortunate position in which I stand with Catherine Pelham."

"And so you ought, and that regret ought to find you occupation enough without thinking of anything else. Never mind my generosity; I cannot help that. My love does not hook on and off at every caprice, like other people's duty."

"Nevertheless, I shall not marry Catherine Pelham," repeated Lincoln doggedly.

"Again agreed, say I; we have settled so far already. But you will marry somebody else, sometime or other, I presume—some unknown princess, perhaps; or else 'tis a vow of celibacy? How can you be such a fool? Are you in another entanglement already? Egad! you waste no time."

"I intend to renew my suit to Lady Sophia Fermor. I have already done so, I may say, to Lady Sophia Fermor," repeated Lincoln stoutly, now that the name had passed his lips. "She is the only one I can ever love or marry. I care not if

it risks my ambition, my fortune—I shall remain faithful only to her."

The Duke's watering eyes danced through their tears. It was an effort not to spring at once into the arms of his nephew. Yet he spoke calmly:

"This, then, is your reason for refusing Catherine? But you can't marry Lady Sophia Fermor, Harry. You would not toss the handkerchief to another man's bride, and he First Minister? eh! You can't when a woman is married already; for she was married last night; your Lady Sophia, she is now Lady Carteret—last night, in Carteret's own house, as I tell you. My Lady Pomfret and the necessary witnesses to the job only being present. My poor Lincoln! 'Tis all over, there is an end of your romance! Put these unhappy letters of yours into the fire, and let us bury this miserable subject for ever. How is it possible that the news did not reach you? Everybody has it this morning; do not stare in that ridiculous way, or Wilmot might enter, and imagine something of importance was the matter."

It was quite true. They were already married. While Lincoln stood staring in his uncle's face, Lord Carteret and Lady Sophia were actually man and wife, and the eager town was enjoying the singular details of the ceremony. Here is Mrs. Delany's account of it:

"*April* 14*th*, 1744. — The wedding was last Saturday evening; they were married at Lord Pomfret's: old Lady Granville was invited, but did not go; the daughters my Lord would not invite, for fear it should offend them too much, in consequence of the recent death of their mother; the first time in his life I ever knew Lord Carteret show consideration for anybody's feelings. At twelve the bride and bridegroom came home, attended by Lady Pomfret and Lady Charlotte Fermor her sister. Lady Granville and Miss Carteret were gone to bed, but Mrs. Faver was there to do the honours, and undress the bride. I really thought Faver loved poor Lady Carteret; but if she had, was it possible for her to go through such a scene? The next day all the Pomfrets

dined there, and nobody was admitted. I left my name with the crowd, and shall wait till I am sent for: they have furnished all the town with tittle-tattle."

What a scene, this secret marriage under the shades of night, with its clandestine air! no favours, no guests, no bridal finery! But were there no forebodings on the part of the chief performers, no regrets on either side? Lord Carteret's wife was but a few months buried, and he bore a grave face during the ceremony. Was there no frowning spectre of an unburied love to give Lady Sophia warning, and forbid the bans? Yet the performance was gone through somehow, and so an end of all. The Court parson closed his book, and Lady Sophia had promised to love and honour the widower and grandfather at her side.

Walpole's account of this extraordinary marriage tallies exactly with Mrs. Delany's. He writes:

"The chief entertainment has been the nuptials of our great Quixote and the fair Sophia. Last night they were married, and as all he does must

have a particular air in it, they supped at Lord Pomfret's. At twelve, Lady Granville, his mother, and all his family went to bed but the porter; then my Lord went home and waited for her in the lodge. She came alone in a hackney chair, met him in the hall, and was led up the back stairs to her bedroom. What is ridiculously lucky is, that Lord Lincoln goes into waiting to-day, and will have to present her! On Tuesday she stands godmother with the King to Lady Dysart's child, her new granddaughter.

"I am impatient to see the whole *ménage*; it will be admirable. There is a wild young Venetian ambassadress come, who is reckoned very pretty. I don't think so. She is foolish and childish to a degree. She said, 'Lord! the old secretary is going to be married!' They told her he was but fifty-four. 'But fifty-four! Why,' said she, 'my husband is but two and forty, and I think him the oldest man in the world."

CHAPTER XII.

LA REINE EST MORTE—VIVE LA REINE!

So by this strange marriage ceremony Lady Sophia Fermor is raised to the dignity of the great minister's wife; and still true to its task, Walpole's epigrammatic pen tracks her movements from ball to assembly: the subject has lost none of its interest for him, the narrative seems even to gather fresh bitterness as he proceeds:

"There is to be a great ball to-morrow at the Duchess of Richmond's, for my Lady Carteret. The Prince of Wales is to be there. Carteret's court pay her the highest honours, which she receives with the highest state. I have seen her but once, and found her just what I expected, *très-grande dame*—full of herself, and yet not with an air of happiness. She looks ill, and is

grown lean, but is still the finest figure in the world. The mother is not so exalted as I expected. I fancy Carteret has kept his word, and does not marry her also."

"Full of dignity, but not with an air of happiness." Then the gleeful sarcasm, "Carteret has not married the mother." All through the strain of affected good-humour runs a vein of malice, which spends itself indiscriminately at the expense of Pomfrets, Granvilles and Carterets.

Possibly the Carteret marriage was as much a shock as a surprise to Walpole. He might have foreseen from the first that Lord Lincoln's suit would end in failure; he was standing by all the while, quietly biding his time, while one by one the many competitors for her hand disappeared from the scene in succession. How natural that he should have nourished secret hopes, perhaps have seen a fate in it! Lovers are prone to such superstitions. How if the hand of this coveted beauty were after all to be the prize of a certain supercilious fine gentleman? Who could tell?

She might be an exception to the rule of universal perfidy which characterised her aspiring and intriguing sex. A better nature might develop itself in her when experience of the world had taught her something of its vanity and hollowness, a higher aim in life than the vulgar ambition of her angling mother and upstart family; and instead of Lincoln or Carteret, ministers or dukes, bestow herself on a conceited dilettante, who would compose a laboured sonnet to her beauty, or a letter (intended for publication) filled with love and praises to Mann, or a satire on her family, or an epigram on his mother-in-law, or build her perhaps a gimcrack palace down by Twickenham, and be enraptured all the days of his life; or else tire of his paragon in the honeymoon, as the case might be. But down came the thunderclap of this Carteret marriage to shatter his flimsy dream, and Walpole never attempted to place together the broken pieces of it again: he went to his grave a scoffer at woman's virtue, a sceptic and derider of all feminine attributes

and endowments. Kitty Clive contained all the virtue which he sought for in the sex afterwards. He swathed himself up, fold on fold, in a thousand tricksy affectations, until every part of the original man was wrapt in artifice. What wonder if the poor worm, hidden in this cocoon of vanities, should cease in the end to have any separate existence at all! After adopting a new alias at every turn of fancy, 'tis not easy to be certain of one's own identity at last.

Walpole clearly failed in establishing it, or purposely avoided presenting it to view. Turning over the pages of his correspondence—that immense portfolio filled with elaborate sketches of himself—the eye becomes dazzled and bewildered at all the sides or surfaces of the man which one sees, or thinks to see. Like the diagrams seen in a kaleidoscope—no sooner has a definite form arrested the attention, than an imperceptible movement, and the bits of broken glass and tinsel slide magically away into another pattern. Impossible to say whether Walpole is most poet, painter, macaroni, littérateur,

politician, trifler. He is an actor filling many parts. There is not a truthful outline of himself in all these drawings; his pencil is purposely false when it takes his own features for model; the delight of his vanity seems to be, to mislead and mystify; and it is through mere inadvertence that he exposes his disappointment regarding Lady Sophia Fermor, a subject which his inherent fastidiousness should of all things desire to conceal.

But he cannot turn away from her image; the old fascination remains strong as ever after her marriage; and gossip connected with her movements, and with the Carteret family, fills up every page which goes from his hand. Again he writes:

"I will not fail to make your compliments to the Pomfrets and Carterets: I see them seldom, but I am in favour, so I conclude, for my Lady Pomfret told me the other night that I said better things than anybody. I was with them all at a subscription ball at Ranelagh last week, which my

Lady Carteret thought proper to look upon as given to her, and thanked the gentlemen, who were not quite so well pleased at her condescending to take it to herself. My Lord stayed with her there till four in the morning. They are all fondness, walk together, and stop every five minutes to kiss. Madame de Craon is cipher to her for grandeur. The ball was an excessively hot night, yet she was dressed in a magnificent brocade. I did the honours of all her dress. 'How charming your Ladyship's cross is! I am sure the design is your own?' 'No, indeed, my Lord sent it to me just as it is.' 'How fine your earrings are!' 'Oh! but they are very heavy.' Then as much to the mother. Do you wonder that I say better things than anybody?

"I don't think it would be quite unadvisable for Ugoccioni to take a jaunt hither. My Lady Carteret would take violently to anything that came so far to adore her grandeur. I believe even my Lady Pomfret would be persuaded he had

seen the star of their glory travelling westward to direct him.

"For my part, I expect soon to make a figure too in the political magazine, for all our Florence set are coming to grandeur; but you and my Lady Carteret have overstepped me. I met my Lady Carteret the other day at Knapton, the portrait painter's, and *desired leave to stay while she sat for her picture.* She is drawn crowned with corn, like the Goddess of Plenty, and a mild dove in her hand, like Mrs. Venus. We had much of my Lord, and my Lord. The Countess mother was glad my Lord was not there; he was never satisfied with the eyes; she was afraid he would have had them drawn bigger than the cheeks. I made your compliments abundantly—cried down the charms of the picture politically."

The wit of these passages, the graceful, airy style, is its own recommendation; but when, in addition, we discover that every epigram, each elaborate flourish of the pen, is but another link in that chain of evidence which our historian is forging against

himself—that he is really writing the history of his own disappointment, and that for our edification and amusement—then enjoyment of the style becomes absorbed in the interest of the narrative, and we feel an exquisite, a malignant pleasure at having detected his secret.

He is never weary of this subject; never dull; he can turn to it afresh, and find new words to set to the familiar tune, as if deriving inspiration, and a peculiar felicity of expression from the theme:

"You would be diverted with the grandeur of our old Florentine beauty, Lady Carteret," he writes again. "She grows more short-sighted every day; she can't walk a step without leaning on one of her ancient daughters-in-law. Lord Tweeddale and Lord Bathurst are her constant gentlemen ushers."

Let us linger over the flagon of Lacryma which our Horace serves out with such unconscious generosity. Suffer it to dwell on the palate as it goes down; how rare the bouquet of this

rich Falernian vintage! Here is another exquisite passage: "She has not digested her resentment against Lincoln yet. She was walking at Ranelagh the other night, and a Spanish refugee marquis, who is of the Carteret court, but who, not being quite perfect in the *carte du pays*, told my Lady that Lord Lincoln had promised him to make a very good husband to Miss Pelham. Lady Carteret, with an accent of energy, replied, 'J'espère qu'il tiendra sa promesse.' Here is a good epigram that has been made upon her:

> "'Her beauty, like the Scripture feast,
> To which the invited never came,
> Deprived of its intended guest,
> Was given to the blind and lame.'"

"*August* 16.—My Lady Carteret is at Tunbridge Wells. There is great anxiety for a son. His only one is gone quite mad; about a fortnight ago he was at the Duke of Bedford's, and as much in his few senses as ever. At five o'clock in the morning he waked the Duke and Duchess all

bloody, and with the lappet of his coat held up full of ears; he had been in the stable and cropped all the horses. He is shut up."

What a procession of vanities! Our showman exhibits them, following quickly one on the other like pictures in a panorama. Again his eyes revert with all directness to the central figure:

"My lady is at the honeymoon of her grandeur; she lives in public places, whither she is escorted by the old beaux of her husband's court; fair-wigged old gallants—the Duke of Bolton, Lord Tweeddale, Lord Bathurst, and Charles Fielding; and she is all over knots and small hoods and ribands. Her brother told me the other night, 'Indeed I think my thister doesth countenanth Ranelagh too much.'"

Even Lempster's unhappy lisp does not pass without a contemptuous notice. The passage concludes with the sentence:

"They call my Lord Pomfret King Stanislaus the Queen's father."

On the 18th of October, 1744, by singular

coincidence, two famous old ladies went out of this world together—Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, and Grace Countess of Granville. Equal in rank, pretensions, arrogance, and also rivals in pride and absurdity, they went forth hand in hand into the world of spirits, possibly to continue to wrangle for precedence and preferment there. It does not appear that Lady Granville owed her death directly to the marriage of her son, but she had reigned so long, and tyrannized so mightily in his household, that life with a circumscribed dominion must have been hard to bear.

At all events, whether of the marriage or of vexation, she died shortly after it, and Lady Sophia became what Lord Carteret's first wife had never been—mistress in her own house, and Countess of Granville. The deceased lady had been Countess in her own right, and Lord Carteret succeeded to her wealth, title and honours.

This bereavement did not give great sorrow to the Fermors; from the beginning Lady Pomfret

had regarded the existence of old Lady Granville as the one defect in the Carteret alliance, and now that she was removed to a better world Lady Pomfret prepared to supply the place of a mother to her son-in-law.

She accordingly put on additional state, and refurnished her town residence. The staff of menials was enlarged. There were new liveries and new carriages of more fashionable build. Edward the Confessor was again disturbed, brought from Easton Neston and stuck up in the dining-room between his two queens. A series of profuse entertainments commenced for her daughter, the handsomest, most fashionable Countess in London. To supply this extravagance more money was necessarily raised off the burdened estate into which Lord Lempster was so rapidly eating his evil way. But the Countess did not mind. Tradespeople were only too happy to oblige by keeping back their inconvenient accounts, and at the worst the family jewels remained to pawn. Whatever it cost she

determined that a paltry question of money should not interfere with the ambition of her lifetime, now realized at last.

For at last she felt herself fairly established as a very great lady, and entitled to assume becoming airs of consequence and grandeur. She became fine now, rather than brilliant and literary; her eye-glass grows more disdainful; she is less demonstrative with her classical erudition; she controls her wit, and instead of attracting by her endowments, seeks rather to impress by her repose; while Walpole standing by, notes each of these clumsy changes with merciless accuracy and with merciless venom.

From this sublime atmosphere of high-bred repose she was, however, rudely startled by a strange and wholly unexpected event—the sudden resignation of my Lord her son-in-law.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VICTORIOUS DESCENT.

AFTER a most resolute struggle, amazing Parliament by his eloquence, and vanquishing one after the other every political opponent who ventured to cross weapons with him in debate, crushing the victorious cabal with the virus of his ever-ready sarcasm, overwhelming Newcastle and the Pelhams with ridicule, Lord Granville went under at last, beaten as well by the jealousies and personal dislikes which his demeanour provoked as by the combinations of that jubilant band of conspirators which rushed into office, hungry for its spoils. He fell—rather, he descended—from his eminence with a shrug, a gibe upon his lips, and, wishing the conquerors joy of their victory, resigned his office.

But who had conceived and directed the successful plot which had hurled the stately Granville from his eminence? What master spirit had hollowed out the secret mine at his feet, and exploded it with such effect? Some man of parts, no doubt; a hound of noblest blood, trained on the highest game only, had pulled down this giant stag; some practised parliamentary gladiator perhaps, one who had proposed the discomfiture of the minister as the achievement of a lifetime. Not the buffoon Duke, surely—dunce, dunderhead, caricature as he was? Had this mousing owl struck the soaring falcon from his place of pride? A fall which resounded throughout the empire, was it the work of a bungling mountebank? Even so. Newcastle, equipped with his solitary gift of cunning, had drilled into the base of this stately Corinthian column, and it lay shattered at his ignoble feet.

Walpole writes to Mann:

"I have not prepared you for a great event, beeause it really was so unlikely to happen; but to keep you no longer in suspense, Lord Granville

has *resigned*—that is the term. But in few words the truth of the history is, that the Duke of Newcastle—mind, the words I am going to use are not mine but his Majesty's—(being grown as jealous of Lord Granville as ever he had been of Lord Orford, and wanting to be first minister himself, the puppy!) and his brother, Mr. Pelham (being as susceptible of the noble passion of jealousy as he is), have long been conspiring to overturn the great lord. Resolution and capacity were all that was wanted to bring it about; for the imperiousness and universal contempt which Lord Carteret had for them and for the rest of the ministry, and the rest of the nation, had made almost all men his enemies; and indeed he took no pains to make friends: his maxim was—give any man the Crown on his side and he can defy everything. Almost the entire Cabinet Council let the King know that he must part with them or with Lord Granville. The monarch does not love to be forced, and his son is full as angry. Both tried to avoid the rupture, but on Saturday it was privately

determined: Lord Granville resigned the seals, and the Duke of Newcastle and his brother are to have the whole formation of the Cabinet. The King has declared that my Lord Granville has his opinion and affection, the Prince warmly and openly espouses him. Judge how agreeably the two brothers will enjoy their ministry. For my part, I behold all with great tranquillity. I cannot be sorry for Lord Granville, for he certainly sacrificed everything to please the King; and I cannot be glad for the Pelhams, for they sacrifice everything to their own jealousy and ambition."

Again:

"Who would not laugh at a world where so ridiculous a creature as the Duke of Newcastle can overturn ministries? Don't take me for a partizan of Lord Granville's because I despise his rivals. I am not for adopting his measures; they are wild and dangerous: in his single capacity I think him a great genius, and am pleased with his company. His frankness charms one when he has not to depend on it, and his contempt for fools is very

flattering to any one who happens to know the present ministry. If my Lord Granville had any resentment, as he seems to have nothing but thirst, sure there is no vengeance he might not take. So far from contracting any prudence by his fall, he laughs it off every night over two or three bottles."

It was impossible for Walpole, when writing on the fall of Lady Granville's husband, not to observe in what manner the event affected her ladyship and her connections; accordingly he proceeds:

"Who are mortified? Are the fair Sophia and the queen-mother? However, the daughter carries it off heroically; the very night of her fall she went to the Oratorio. I talked to her much, and recollected all that had been said to myself upon a like occasion three years ago. I succeeded, and am invited to her assembly next Tuesday. Tell Ugoccioni that she still keeps up the conversazione or he will hang himself. She had no court at the Oratorio, but an ugly sister Henrietta, and the fair old-fashioned Duke of Bolton. It put me in

mind of a scene in Harry the Eighth, where Queen Caroline appears after her divorce with Patience, the waiting-woman, and Griffith, her gentleman usher."

November the 9th, in the same vein he continues:

"Our old acquaintance the Pomfrets make much of their great matrimony. The new Lady Granville was at home the other night, for the first time of her being mistress of the house. I was invited, for I am much in favor with them all; but I found myself extremely *déplacé*; there was nothing but the Winchilseas and Baths, and the gleanings of a party stuffed out into a faction; some foreign ministers, and the whole blood of Fermor. My Lady Pomfret asked me if I corresponded still with the Grifona. 'No,' I said; 'since I had been threatened with a regale of hams and Florence wine I had dropped it.' My Lady Granville said, 'You was afraid of being thought interested.' 'Yes,' said the queen-mother, with all the importance with which she used to blunder out pieces of heathen mythology, 'I think it was very *ministerial*.'

Don't you think that word came in as awkwardly as I did into their room?"

It was characteristic of Lady Granville to exhibit a scornful indifference on the occasion of her lord's descent. Natures of a certain temper put on the loftiest bearing under circumstances of humiliation and defeat. Those courtiers who, like Walpole, went out to see a haughty countess fallen from her high estate were galled at the unconscious air with which she treated the catastrophe. Lord Granville, with a sneer at his rivals, at his colleagues, at the Commons, and also with unaffected indifference and good-humour, retired to the unrestricted enjoyment of domestic bliss, or to the equally dear solace of his books and his bottle. He washed his hands of politics, and was only too glad to be done with the rabble of the House of Commons with whom politics brought him in contact. While the struggle lasted the excitement of combat kept his interest alive, and he fought out the match with energy; but when the fortunes of the day were decided he discovered that he had lost nothing but annoyance

and discomfort by defeat; his influence at Court was rather increased thereby, his friends and partizans rallied all the closer round him, and the greater liberty, which suffered him to indulge his pleasures and his tastes, was a boon which he prized most of all. Meanwhile his wife appeared in all public places, and made the envious world stare at her dress, her jewels, her beauty, her visible happiness. Her fortune was too high and serene to be disturbed by such a bagatelle as the ruin of ministers or the clash of party. The Court might mourn for the fall of its favourite, factions and politicians go by the ears, the nation might rock to its centre—but nothing should disturb the peace, and pride, the superb equanimity of this too happy Countess—nothing. Nevertheless at the moment of my Lord's resignation another event occurred, perhaps a more trying one still. Yet Walpole was possibly disappointed in its visible effect upon her; as we may conclude he would have been only too careful to record any manifestation of feeling on such a subject. It is

odd that he should be silent on such a momentous event as the marriage of my Lord Lincoln with his cousin, which at this period took place, with much pomp, at Esher, to the intense satisfaction of the Pelham faction.

CHAPTER XIV.

CARTERET HOUSE.

CARTERET House was the last house in Arlington Street at that side of the Green Park, and as Walpole resided there, he had facilities for observing how things went on. We know he did not neglect his opportunities.

Lady Granville continued to queen it in regal state. Her influence on society was rather enhanced than otherwise by the resignation, for her husband's unpopularity in Parliament was counterbalanced by a large share of Court favour; and as his Majesty smiled on every one who paid attention to the Granvilles, it was understood that the road to royal notice was by way of Arlington Street. Besides, it was considered good policy to attach oneself to the fallen minister, for no one believed in

the duration of the Pelham-Newcastle Cabinet: it appeared obvious that a man of Lord Granville's ability and enterprise was not to remain long in the shade, and a restoration to power was predicted for him whenever he seriously desired it.

While her husband was in office, Lady Granville had begun to give Tuesday receptions; afterwards these entertainments were continued, and became more the rage than before. The fashion of London assembled there, and the handsomest Countess in Europe exerted herself to do the honours so well, that the Carteret House Tuesdays began not only to exercise a social, but shortly a political effect.

The reigning Pelhams found these parties a political obstruction, and though Henry Pelham had more discretion than to express his mortification in words, his brother Newcastle, in open-mouthed distress on the subject, was always stammering out abuse of Carteret and his wife, scoffing at her pretensions to beauty, wondering how people could be so ignorant or so short-sighted as to

attach themselves to a discomfited minister and a declining cause.

We can imagine how Lady Granville enjoyed this social triumph over the detested family. It was some compensation for the loss of office itself, and she exerted every influence to render the Tuesdays more successful and mortifying than ever. She invented a new plan of sending cards of invitation to the ladies only, and declared all gentlemen welcome to her house. This had the happiest effect, although ladies of the Pelham faction affected prudish airs of disapproval at the practice.

Walpole writes:

"The great present disturbance in politics are my Lady Granville's assemblies, which I do assure you distress the Pelhams infinitely more than a mysterious meeting of the States would, and far more than the abrupt breaking up of the Diet at Grodno. Her house is very fine, she very handsome, her Lord very agreeable and extraordinary, and yet the Duke of Newcastle wonders that people will go there. You can't

imagine how my Lady Granville shines in doing the honours. You know she is made for it. My Lord has new furnished his mother's apartments for her, and given her a magnificent set of dressing plate; he is very fond of her, and she as fond of his being so."

Lady Lincoln's arrival in town, shortly after her marriage, was the next notable event of the season. There were assemblies and fêtes without number in her honour. The Duchess of Newcastle threw open her mansion, and a series of gorgeous entertainments succeeded each other rapidly; and presently Lady Lincoln began to receive on her own account, and all persons of distinction not compromised by Granville predilections were invited to either of the Pelham mansions. The Duke of Newcastle attempted an organised opposition to the Carteret House Court, and endeavoured to create a rival to Lady Granville in his niece. How eagerly the former accepted the challenge, and entered into the contest! It seemed to the Duke that the Countess

of Lincoln must easily become a great social power : heiress to the Pelhams, the future Duchess of Newcastle, with an enormous fortune, with immense social forces gathered around her—all the influence which the cohesive Pelham family could command—gifted also with considerable personal attractions, and notoriously of an amiable and conciliating disposition, perfectly well-bred and agreeable. The vain old intriguer reckoned that a lady set forth with such advantages, and his relative, would find it easy to outshine this forward daughter of an upstart family, who, failing to secure a match in his nephew Lincoln, had brazenly carried the commodity of her beauty into the open market, and struck a successful bargain by trading on the tipsy imbecility of the defeated Granville. The Duke relied on the discernment of well-bred society to see with his eyes; but society persisted in being no further discerning than the purblind public itself. Perhaps Lady Lincoln did not possess the knack of making herself popular; but she was not appreciated. The

simplicity of her manners did not please; she wanted distinction; her beauty was not striking enough for London. The historic Pelham diamonds blazed unbecomingly on her modest brow; so the attendance at her gorgeous palace gradually grew thinner after each reception, waverers seceded one by one to the Granville Court, until at length Lady Lincoln's society was limited to those of Pelham blood and politics, and to adventurers whose fortunes and prospects lay in the cultivation of the minister's favour. Walpole says they used to hire rows of hackney-coaches to draw up before the door, and make a show of company.

The attempt at social rivalry was a total failure; the only result being a rebound of popularity in favour of the Carteret House faction—the Grandvillians, as they were called. Thenceforward it was a succession of victories; the attempts of the ministerial Duchess and the Countess of Lincoln became a subject for the ridicule of Granville satellites and wits.

Everything worth having in London crowded

into Arlington Street: the cream of rank and fashion, together with painters, authors, dramatists —artists of the opera even—orators, diplomatists—my Lord did not mind who, so that intellect or attainments justified the introduction. "Let those who did not admire his company stay away," he said with a shrug, at a time when half the town was striving for invitations to his house. It became a sort of Hôtel Rambouillet. Carteret House gossip grew to be the attraction of the Court. The King expressed his admiration for its mistress, while the Prince ostentatiously declared himself for the ex-minister. Also, at the drawing-room, the King's behaviour to Lady Granville gave her rank as first lady in the kingdom, while he purposely turned his back on Lady Lincoln and the Duchess of Newcastle.

Here was a dear triumph at last. Pelham pride had blighted her young life, Pelham ambition had stood between her and Lincoln—the only man who had a place in her affections. The Duke of Newcastle had disdained her for his niece, and

now, at the height of his success, the Duke felt the influence of her talents and her beauty—was forced to regard her with feelings of envy and disappointment, with dread even. This was revenge.

But there was promise of dearer felicities in store. It was whispered that there were hopes of an heir, and her delighted mother passed the happy news into the eager ears of the town. There was no limit to the absurdities of the Countess-mother on the joyful event. Of course it was to be a son; nothing else was expected. My Lord had married on purpose to have a son, and Walpole is careful to inform us "that all the pretty boys in London were brought to Lady Granville, as patterns to look at."

About this time the Venetian ambassadress gave a masquerade for the Prince of Wales, who named the company, and—marvellous compliment!—expressly excluded Lady Lincoln, or any of the Pelham faction, from the list of guests.

Walpole finds his way to this masquerade, and observes that:

"My Lady Granville came late, dressed like Imoinda, and handsomer than one of the houris."

She was received like a royal personage; the most distinguished guests were brought up and presented to her; way was made through the press whenever she turned. The Prince asked her to dance, but she respectfully declined, and Lady Pomfret, who was by, observed that Lady Granville was not equal to any sort of exertion *at present.*

We can imagine Lady Pomfret's figure on this happy night, rouged, and more over-dressed than ever, ablaze with jewels, although she and her two unmarried daughters appeared in the costume of Italian peasants.

> "This red's too palé, nor gives a distant grace;
> Madame to-day puts on her op'ra face:
> Now flames her cheek, so strong her charms prevail,
> That on her gown the silken rose looks pale!"

In the course of the evening she happened to be conversing with Lord Holderness, lately returned from the Hague. Holland was a very dull Court and

Lord Holderness a gentleman of slow perceptions, which a diplomatic career among the Dutchmen had not improved. He was a good listener, however, and Lady Pomfret was in the act of giving him opinions on literature, taste, old china, Dutch art, and Dutch cheese; on the coloured ribbons which best became amber-toned satin; on the condition of Lady Granville, and the hopes of my Lord, and the compliments the Prince had made her, when Mr. Winnington came up, with a Spanish nun on his arm. The nun had for coolness cut the nose off her mask: it was Lady Townshend.

The Marchioness was in great feather, for she had become a celebrity during the past few days; a battle had been fought about her reputation; Mr. Winnington being one of the warriors, and young George Townshend, a relative of her husband, and quite a youth, the other. Townshend had said something uncomplimentary of his fair kinswoman; Mr. Winnington resented it; a message followed; and the whole town was surprised to find that Lady Townshend's reputation was a

thing for two gentlemen to draw their swords about. Perhaps the lady was herself as much astonished as anybody. Not that the duel was much of a battle in itself. According to Walpole's account, both combatants walked into Hyde Park in the morning; scratched themselves; then George Townshend tumbled into two ditches; and they walked home arm-and-arm."

However, it was a real duel, and Lady Townshend, an exalted Marchioness that night, kept perambulating the room accompanied by her stalwart knight, the clever, sneering, cautious Winnington, who was not by any means equally proud of the honours which he had won, or the comments which grew out of the affair.

"It is very hot to-night, but you, madam, are the first nun I ever saw without a nose," said Lady Pomfret, courtesying to her friend with the air of an empress.

"We see strange sights every day and night of our lives," said the tart little Marchioness. "For

instance, "I never saw a peasant wearing diamonds before to-night. You are the very first I ever met with." She took her filigree fan from the inattentive Winnington. "Yet this is a surprising age, and one must expect to see anything happen in it. There is Sophy become Lady Granville too; another of those miracles which time has brought about. To be sure, she is a miracle of beauty—a paragon; and now as his wife the foremost lady of the land. Yet who would have guessed at all this happening within a short twelvemonth?"

"Lady Granville's beauty would do honour to any eminence, and she looks more lovely than ever to-night," suggests the yawning Winnington.

"Yet she should not look her best," answered Lady Pomfret eagerly. "It is not to be expected; as she is far from strong just now; indeed, she had to lie abed all day with a headache, and I feared she might not be well enough to appear here; but it would have been a disappointment to the ambassadress, and the Prince was so very pressing, that we had to run the risk. The weight of her

diamonds at the drawing-room yesterday was, I think, one of the causes of her headache."

"I wonder that she put herself to such an inconvenience through mere vanity," said Lady Townshend, blandly glancing over the edge of her fan. "One would expect more sense from the wife of Lord Granville."

"But it was precisely to please him that she did it," answered Lady Pomfret; "he is not satisfied unless she be magnificent: he would have her covered with jewels; he would buy up all the lace in London to put it on her. He takes such pride in her beauty, and so much trouble about her adornment, that Sophy would be culpable not to humour him. Would you believe it?—the dress which she wears to-night is selected by himself; he worships the ground she walks on."

"And is she equally fond of him?" asks Lady Townshend.

"A man who would lay the whole world at her feet, who only lives to indulge her in caprice, who has spent a fortune furnishing her

apartments—can she help loving him? A man of his eminence; of such reputation—so original, so clever, so entertaining."

"No doubt of my Lord Granville's ability and attainments," put in Mr. Winnington.

"Yet to fall as he did!" said the Marchioness. "In the fulness of his power to be tripped up by the Pelham set—outwitted by his Grace of Newcastle. What a humiliation! I wonder my Lord Granville resigned so easily."

"But he need not have resigned; it was his own wish altogether," exclaimed Lady Pomfret innocently. "He was solicited to retain office; the Court was in despair at his retirement. The King and Prince united in entreating him to remain, but my Lord despised his colleagues and refused to have to do with them; that was the only cause of it. However, he can become first minister again by only holding up his finger. The King would be too glad of it; he enjoys the confidence of his Majesty, and his advice is acted on when the present set are not consulted at all. Imagine that! The Prince

excluded all of the Pelham set from these rooms to-night. Was that a compliment to my Lord? And we know how his Majesty behaved to Sophia at the drawing-room yesterday; also of his manner to Lady Lincoln."

"And Lady Lincoln, I understand, felt it very much," said Winnington. "there is a story about tears; somebody saw her crying in the carriage on the drive home."

"The Duke and his brother are at no pains to conceal their mortification at Lady Granville's Tuesdays. It embarrasses the Government, undoubtedly. How my Lord must appreciate the difficulty; he has a fine sense of humour. The Pelham women must feel it too—Lady Lincoln and the Duchess."

Lady Pomfret laughed.

"It is gall and wormwood to them; they would poison Sophia. You know of their attempt at rivalry, and what success attended it. As if people could be enticed to their assemblies! That old scarecrow, the Duchess, would frighten any one out

of his wits; and the insipid, over-dressed little goose, Lady Lincoln was never yet known to open her simpering lips in her own house."

"She certainly has not the gift of tongues," said Lady Townshend.

"But how bored at the business Lincoln must be," said Winnington; "a man of taste and feeling, at one time he gave promise of better things."

"That! for the promises of my Lord Lincoln," said Lady Pomfret briskly, shutting her fan; "he is as about as trustworthy as my lap-dog Shock, and own nephew to his lying uncle—a precious pair they are!"

"My dear! you have done far better, and can afford to forgive them," said Lady Townshend laughing. "You have secured a vastly fine establishment for Lady Sophia. I hope you may soon do as well for another daughter, and have Lady Charlotte as well settled."

"That would be impossible."

"I am confident Lady Charlotte merits no lesser fortune," simpered Winnington.

"Charlotte may be well enough—but another Lord Granville is not to be had," answered the Countess-mother; "so magnificent, so generous, princely, in his tastes. Have you seen the superb set of dressing plate he presented her with last week? 'Tis worthy of an Eastern caliph, and reminds one of the Arabian Nights."

"Oh! that is to be shown off at the lying-in," said Lady Townshend. "I hope she may have a son."

"Indeed we anticipate no less"—Lady Pomfret dropped her voice so as to be heard by the Marchioness only—"Lord Granville is most anxious for a son, and it ought to be a son. My Lord thinks a son of Sophia's would shed lustre on the House of Granville, and it is true, he would inherit intellect from my Lord, and a proportion probably of her beauty and cleverness."

"She is indeed very beautiful," said Lady Ethelreda, glancing critically at Lady Granville, who at the moment passed by. "I agree with Mr. Winnington, she grows lovelier than ever."

"But she is standing too long talking to the

Prince, and in her condition we must be careful," interrupted Lady Pomfret, moving away. "I must endeavour to get her away from the Prince; he hangs about her so all the evening."

When they were alone Lady Townshend said—"Observe how she minces—she pronounced the word *Prantz!* as if blowing it through a brass trumpet."

"The accent is modish, and the taste of our Countess *prononcé*," lisps Winnington.

"How she dins at one with her my Lord and my Lord, at every hand's turn, especially when every one knows that my Lord has married the daughter only, and barely tolerates the *belle-mère* inside the door."

"But does he tolerate?—and why? Why doesn't he slam the door?"

"'Twould be no use if he did; she'd climb in at the window—tiffing on for ever about her jewels, and her plate, and her beauty, when every one knows how matters are."

"But does any one know?"

"Such a caricature, with her airs, her accent, and—her *Prantz*."

"Granville has been lucky in each of his wives, but in the items of mother and mother-in-law there has been something of a set-off."

"Pride will have a fall some day; and she has so much of it, and has perched herself up so high, that there will be a famous tumble when the day comes."

"And we shall be all so sorry for it, for the fall, I mean," said Winnington, presenting his arm.

Lady Townshend made a face.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE season continued gay, and following the Venetian ambassador's came other entertainments in which Lady Granville was the central figure. She was as beautiful, as superb, as short-sighted as ever; and still industriously noting every detail connected with her, unconsciously expressing his own feelings, his admiration, spite, envy, love, and disappointment, continuing to write her biography and his own, Horace Walpole relates that—

"The other night my Lady Townshend made a great ball on her son's coming of age. I went for a little while, little thinking of dancing.

"My Lady Granville was there, most vastly fine, in gold brocade and jewels, but I thought *looking*

pale and sad. I asked my Lord Granville why my Lady did not dance. 'Oh Lord! I wish you would ask her; I wish you would; she will dance with you.' I was caught, and had to walk down one country-dance with her; but the prudent *signora madre* would not let her expose the young Carteret any further."

Yet Walpole perceives the first creeping on of the shadow which is presently about to envelop that fair and brilliant young life; perhaps he alone at Lady Townshend's assembly noticed that she looked pale and sad: no one felt a deeper interest, or a more genuine solicitude about her looks, for all his flippancy. He was perpetually at Carteret House at this time: he liked the prestige of being welcomed there; and was also vain of his position with Lady Granville—even of his acquaintance with her lord, though that was a peculiar one. The very oddness of that intimacy had an attractiveness of its own, as Lord Granville, the most bitter opponent of his father, had contributed more than any one to drive Sir Robert from office, and Horace

must, on that account, have hated him, although, with exceptional generosity, paying full tribute to his talents and attainments. Lord Granville had besides heard of the early proceedings in Florence; of his attachment to Lady Sophia, of the intervention of her mother; and once set on the track, he must have readily perceived that his guest's interest in his wife had not died out since her marriage. Then the fascinations of Walpole's manner, his position as a man of fashion—all this might have alarmed a husband of his years, but not a husband of his temperament; for it was Granville's nature to neglect every precaution, and laugh at dangers that might make other men nervous. This handsome dandy possibly in love with his beautiful wife! A reason for him to bring them frequently together—Walpole, who owed him a grudge if ever man did, on family accounts—a reason to afford him every opportunity of requiting it. Lord Granville did everything that cautious men would shrink from; not out of dullness or blindness, but out of contempt for a cautious policy, and for

public opinion, or out of defiance of it. In his friendships, in society, in politics, this characteristic always appeared. When Pulteney was the most unpopular man in the kingdom, Granville became his friend; and at a time when popularity was of the utmost consequence to himself, and precisely because it was the most impolitic alliance for him to make, he sat in the same coach with Pulteney, and was never so well pleased as when it was pelted by the mob. Such a mixture of haughtiness and indifference, of ambition and recklessness, was rare. It was these qualities which made him so dangerous an adversary in politics, for in a non-pharisaical sense he truly was not as other men, and those who sought to treat with, or to use him, could never discover by what wire to pull him: he had a jaunty way of laughing into solemn faces, and of turning his back when it was artfully sought to win him by approaching with an affectation of openness and candour.

But a real chance of Lord Granville's restoration to power arises suddenly, and Walpole, who is on

the spot, with the advantage of a near view behind the scenes, has his sneer ready prepared to tell us all about it, when the sneer as suddenly withers on his lips, and is followed by a thrill of horror.

This year, 1745, on the 26th July, Charles Edward landed in Scotland, and raised his standard. Lord Granville, who had the entire confidence of the King, persuaded him that the rebellion was of no consequence; and when the ministers proposed measures of repression, his Majesty turned his back, exclaiming, "Pho! don't talk to me that stuff." However, despatch after despatch came galloping in from the north, troops were massed and moved, bugles sounded all over the kingdom; the nation, in alarm, turned to the Executive; the Executive found its hands tied; members of the Cabinet looked to the chief secretary; he to the King; and his Majesty to Lord Granville, who laughed at the whole affair. Things went so far at last, that the Duke of Newcastle, in his jealousy of Granville, was secretly pleased when the rebels made any progress; but even that seemed

incapable of bringing the Court to its senses; the more the rebellion spread, the more pressing the difficulty, the more indifferent the King became. "Things came to such a pass in the end," writes Walpole, "that Mr. Pelham says it is impossible to carry on the Government under such circumstances. He talks every day of resigning; he certainly will resign when the rebellion is got over—if it is got over; so we shall soon see a restoration of Queen Sophia." Here was a chance for the fallen statesman: the ministerial embarrassment was a signal for Granville partizans to rally, and the position of the Pelham-Newcastle Cabinet became hourly more precarious. Its supporters began to waver; the good will of Lord Granville became an object of competition with political perverts. Invitations to the Tuesdays were more eagerly sought after than before, and everything pointed to the fulfilment of Walpole's prediction, the restoration of Queen Sophia.

Then Lord Granville's friends pressed him into action. He was urged to cast aside the new-found

solace of his library, his personal liberty and leisure, and again to appear in the arena of Parliament, which had so lately resounded with the cheers of his victorious opponents; but the ex-minister was in no hurry to comply with the impulses of his friends.

He had enjoyed the prestige of power and the sweets of office so long that they tempted him no more; he did not care to wield the destiny of the nation again; but it was another thing when the opportunity of crushing his enemies was dwelt upon. This moved him. It was shown that he might shatter the well-built Pelham party into atoms; that the mountebank Duke and his brother would be cast from the eminence which they had usurped; that his party was now strong and disciplined, and needed but the leadership of its old captain to attain certain victory.

It was the hope of revenge, not the prospect of office, which seduced him from retirement. The stimulus of personal hatred was alone capable of stirring the lion in his lair, yet the clash of strife

itself was dear to him, and once engaged in the fray the energy and courage of his old nature awoke; so the chiefs of the party were sent for, an active organization initiated at once, and political conclaves began to assemble at Carteret House.

The dismay of the ministry was complete when to the distraction of public affairs was added the revived activity of the Grandvillians. Henry Pelham was for immediate resignation at the news; but the Duke clutched with a death grasp at the power which was escaping like fine sand through his fingers.

His one hope was in the spread of the northern insurrection and the rapid progress of the rebels, of which every despatch increased the alarm now spreading over the country. But the anxiety of the nation did not penetrate the Court circle, and the King would see no facts but in the colours in which the favourite chose to represent them

Lord Granville continued to have daily audiences of his Majesty, and persisted in making light of the

rebellion, out of mere wilfulness, it seemed, because he had done so from the first, or as a rebuff to the members of the Cabinet, who affected to be frightened out of their wits. Meanwhile measures of repression were delayed, and the murmurs of the nation became more ominous.

Precisely at this juncture Lady Granville most perversely gave birth (notwithstanding all the pretty patterns of boys sent her) to a daughter.

It was a sad disappointment. Lord Granville was in council with his Majesty when the news came, and even in the august presence he could not restrain his vexation. The mortification of the Countess his mother-in-law was no less acute; but the rest of the Earl's family, especially his married daughters, did not conceal their joy. The birth of a son would have been the end of their speculations of paternal inheritance.

However, all interest in the sex of the child was speedily absorbed in alarm for the safety of the mother; and that became at once a subject of anxiety. Before her confinement, Lady Granville

had shown symptoms of ill-health, which immediately afterwards were unhappily confirmed; and instead of the rally which physicians hoped for she became weaker and worse—so rapidly, that in a few days the case was recognised as hopeless, and a fortnight after she was a corpse.

It was this which withered the rising sneer on Walpole's lips, and brings his flippant pen to be serious and pathetic. He gives a graphic account of her melancholy death:

"I must tell you what you will be very sorry for. Lady Granville is dead! She had a fever for six weeks before her lying in, and could never get it off. Last Saturday they called in another physician, Dr. Oliver; on Monday he pronounced her out of danger. About seven in the evening, as Lady Pomfret and Lady Charlotte were sitting by her, the first notice they had of her immediate danger was her sighing and saying, 'I feel death come very fast upon me.' She repeated the same words very frequently, remained perfectly in her senses and calm; and died about eleven at night.

Her mother and sister sat by her till she was cold. It is very shocking for anybody so young, so handsome, so arrived at the height of greatness, so sensible of it, and on whom all the joy and grandeur of her family depended, to be so quickly snatched away."

And so the curtain falls. The history of Lady Sophia Fermor is, in its way, as sad a story as ever employed the pen of moralist or historian. We have scarcely done more than record the leading features of the narrative, but her mortal disease probably dated from the period of her final desertion by Lord Lincoln; and though during her short hour of triumph she maintained a high spirit, and suffered no outward sign to express to the world how much the effort cost her, still the interior struggle gradually wore out her spirit and her life.

That triumph itself was the last flash of an expiring flame—hectic and false—which by a supreme effort leaped up into brightness, and then went out for ever.

Lord Lincoln had betrayed and abandoned, yet she truly loved him; and his desertion broke her heart.

A broken heart was the lingering disease which, in the prime of her youth, her beauty, and her grandeur, laid her in the grave.

Indirectly this calamity had an important effect in the political world, as well as on the prospects of factions. As Lord Granville gave up his projects of public life, and retired from society and the Court, the Pelham-Newcastle ministry was saved. The Duke of Newcastle was as thankful as if a Scotch victory had taken place, and Mr. Pelham set to reconstruct his party with fresh energy.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MATRIMONIAL CONCLUSION.

THE retributive justice of fiction is not invariably present in real life, and in the case of Lord Lincoln was conspicuously absent; in no sense did he suffer, in person or fortune, for that vanity and heartlessness which brought one of the most gifted women in England to an untimely grave. In all the substantial relations of life he appears to have been singularly fortunate. The marriage with his cousin brought him wealth and honours; every selfish expectation grounded on it was realized: in time the accumulated wealth of the Pelhams devolved to him; and also with their riches that avarice which was so marked a characteristic of the race. The love of money fastened on him; he set himself to save and multiply his estates; became

greedy for place, and secured many Government sinecures with large salaries, besides various distinctions which attached themselves to his rank. He was created Knight of the Garter, and ultimately Secretary of State.

Withal one does not envy his career: in every worthy sense it was a failure; a disappointment to his connections, and to that party which had founded hopes on his abilities and energy. Ambition of the higher sort, that which seeks a field in intellectual exercise and achievement, was stifled in him even by the very weight of riches. He became vain, pompous, dull, as covetous of the decorations of vulgar rank as if he had been a political parvenu, or a City magnate working his social progress westward. The distinctions of ribands and stars were sufficient for him; his intelligence went to sleep: by degrees his character faded out and lost its elasticity and fibre; his faculties grew torpid from disuse, he became exalted and obscure—a nonentity in public life, an appendage of a Court ceremonial, a dangler

at Clubs, a pompous dispenser of petty Government patronage.

His brain fattened, and, alas! his body also. Luxury, that lazy goddess, cast her net over him, and bound him up in invisible fetters: corpulence seized on his pretty person. Gradually the pleasures of the world gave place to the pleasures of the table. If an ignorant politician and a heavy gentleman to converse with, my Lord was, on the other hand, an excellent gentleman to dine with: he became learned in ragoûts, he introduced the new French fashion of prefacing dinner with soup, he imported his French cooks direct: another foreign habit also—he was almost the first Englishman who wore stays. At an early age he began to struggle against his increasing bulk with straps and whalebone. To his credit be it recorded, he never relaxed in the care of his person; to the last his energy kept watch over his waning beauty. His perukes continued to be the envy of Duke Street barbers; his sleeves were fashioned by foreign scissors. Such point lace! No duchess possessed

finer. Alas! that a double chin should persist in developing itself all the same. And well if that were all: but in spite of gilliflower water, and the care of the skilful Dr. Battersby—the same who invented the eider-down lotion for Madame de Walmoden, and was afterwards rewarded with a knighthood by his Majesty—in spite of his frequent journeys to Bath, in spite of Battersby and the Pump-room, as we say, Lincoln grew to have a blossom nose. In an incredibly short time that facial scandal had already reached maturity. Midnight lobster and morning champagne proved too much for the Doctor and the waters. Imagine that! What an accident for a frouzy fop, who still clung to his juvenile pretensions, who painted his face and slept in curl-papers!

But among the mental changes which time had operated, the most remarkable was the loss of that bump of veneration which had been so marked a characteristic in him. Inconceivable as it seems, he lost all respect for his great uncle,

the Duke. What a revolution Lincoln's moral nature must have passed through when he could refer to Newcastle as "that factious old fool!" Yet this is a quotation taken from his lips. Walpole has drawn his portrait with considerable minuteness at this period, and notes this special change in his dutiful sentiments:

"His (Lord Lincoln's) exceeding pride kept him secluded from the world, and rarely did he appear either at Court or in Parliament. For some time he fluctuated between Lord Bute and Mr. Pitt, to the latter of whom he at last attached himself; but with constant derision of and insult to his uncle, and—whatever were the Duke of Newcastle's faults—cruel and unmerited.

The truth was, Lord Lincoln's avarice was as unbounded as his haughtiness. Though possessed of two places for life, and one of them the most lucrative in England, the auditorship of the Exchequer, which never produces less than eight thousand pounds a year, and during the war had brought in at least twenty, he had resented the

Duke's not bestowing on him two more places for the lives of his younger sons."

And so, proud, dull, ignorant, avaricious, vulgar, worthless, the figure of Lord Lincoln fades back again into the past.

The death of Lady Granville seemed a mortal blow to every hope and enterprise of her mother; as if the corner-stone of the edifice of her ambition had been rudely struck away.

One feels a certain compassion for Lady Pomfret, notwithstanding her worldliness. Although her aspirations were all of the earth, yet her mere human virtues were far above the average, and win a certain degree of reluctant respect. She had great courage and perseverance, a marvellous fertility in resource, an energy that never flagged or desisted. Through her entire Court career we never find her crushed by a disaster or defeated by a reverse. Envious contemporaries who expected to vanquish her with social scorn were disappointed; the sarcasms of society, the malice of rivals of even her own

sex and rank, could do nothing against her. Her courage was ever elastic before adversity, and when trials came they seemed only to reanimate that courage, to strengthen her will and resolution, This had been the characteristic of her life until this crushing blow of Lady Granville's death. Then everybody expected to see a change. It was such a shock to every propriety that this peerless creature should be taken away in the bloom of her youth and beauty, and the elderly husband be left again a widower; but even this was not a mortal wound to the mother. The calamity came and passed over the head of the Countess, leaving her, as before, self-reliant, worldly, covetous, energetic. It was not possible for her now to turn aside from that world in which she had been trained, and whose atmosphere had become her life.

There was a proper season of retirement and of mourning, and again she appears in the thick of the contest of life, plotting, planning, intriguing; sometimes with varied fortunes, but

always persevering in her efforts to advance still a few paces further to the front. Her second daughter, Lady Charlotte, became engaged to Lord Hertford, only son of the Duke of Somerset, a young man of excellent parts and promise. It was a most brilliant connection, and cemented by affection on both sides—moreover there was no opposing influence of any kind. For once it seemed that the course of true love was about to run smooth, when, on the eve of marriage, Lord Hertford took the small-pox, and died of it, to the exceeding grief of all his family and the fixed despair of the charming Duchess of Somerset, who never became reconciled to his loss.

In the suddenness of this shock, and in the importance of the bereavement to the Fermor family, this was as great a blow as the death of Lady Granville; but the brave Countess survived its effects also, as, in truth, did Lady Charlotte herself.

Lady Charlotte seems to have been a practical, strong-minded person, and, fortunately for her peace

of mind, singularly like her mother in matters of sentiment, with a decided turn for philosophy regarding sublunary events—an aptitude for making the best of the inevitable ups and downs of life. No doubt she suffered exceedingly on the death of Lord Hertford; it must have been a great disappointment to her to have missed such a settlement; and it is certain that she exhibited a degree of feeling becoming to the occasion; but when a decorous season of mourning had duly passed, Lady Charlotte was forced to think of her future establishment in the world. She perceived that as a member of a large and not affluent family, and at the head of a cluster of unprovided daughters, it was her duty to move away as soon as possible and lighten the burden on the paternal acres. Accordingly she set herself to the task of reconstructing her matrimonial fortunes, and in the end managed so well as to make an excellent match of it.

William Finch was a handsome dark man, one of Pope's "dark funereal Finches." He

was a childless widower with an exceeding good estate. The Fermor ladies had an inclination for widowers. He sought the hand of Lady Charlotte, and she bestowed it on him, to the great joy of her sisters and family, especially of the Countess, her mother. This was a very fortunate alliance. Mr. Finch afterwards became Earl of Winchilsea. There was a famous wedding. Lady Charlotte was the favourite sister-in-law of Lord Granville, who was present at the marriage, and gave poor Lady Sophia's jewels to the bride, to the especial mortification of the proud Countess of Dysart, who had coveted their inheritance.

All through her life Lady Charlotte Finch was a credit and a comfort to her mother, and resembled her in many particulars. Walpole makes some notes on the resemblance:

"Lady Charlotte Finch, when she saw her company on her lying-in, had two toilets spread in her bed-chamber, with her own and Mr. Finch's dressing plate. This was certainly a stroke of

vulgarity that my Lady Pomfret copied from some *festino* in Italy."

Amongst other attributes, Lady Charlotte inherited the maternal talent of making herself agreeable to important personages. If she had no share of her mother's brilliant attainments, nor pretended to parts and bel esprit, still she was shrewd, clever, and politic, and found herself placed in a position in life which demanded the exercise of all her talents. The Finches were a large connection, and not more knit together than blood relations usually are when there happens to be too many of them together struggling for the same objects, and jostling each other in the press forward of life. Walpole gives us an admirable glimpse of the domestic harmony of the Finches:

"There has been an excellent civil war in the house of Finch," he writes. "Our friend Lady Charlotte presented a daughter of John Finch—his offspring by Miss Younger, whom he has since married. The King, Prince, and Princess received her; her aunt, Lady Bel (Finch), forbad Lady

Charlotte to present her to Princess Emily, whither, however, she carried her in defiance.

"Lady Bel called it * * * * and would not present her—think on the poor girl! Lady Charlotte, with spirit, presented her herself. Mr. W. Finch stepped up to his other sister, the Marchioness of Rockingham, and whispered her, with his composed civility, that he knew it was a plot of her and Lady Bel to make Lady Charlotte miscarry. The sable dame replied, 'This is not the place to be indecent, and therefore I shall only tell you, that you are a rascal and a villain, and that if ever you dare to put your head into my house I will kick you downstairs myself.' *Politesse angloise!*

"Lord Winchilsea came in and informed everybody of any circumstances that tended to make both parties in the wrong. I am impatient to hear how this operates between my Lady Pomfret and her friend Lady Bel. Don't you remember how the Countess used to lug a half-length picture of the latter behind her post-chaise all over Italy,

and have a new frame made for it in every town where she stopped ?"

However, Lady Charlotte Finch was clever, covetous, ambitious; and without acquiring a reputation for selfishness, or committing herself in any visible way, managed more successfully than her mother to obtain everything she most desired in life. She presented no diamond earrings, yet played her cards so well at Court as to secure the post of governess to the Princess of Wales, and afterwards governess to all the royal children. Considering the private history of the family of George III., and when one remembers how each member of it turned out, the qualifications of Lady Winchilsea for the office of governess may be called in question. However, she lived to extreme old age, with the reputation of having been unexceptional in every relation of life.

Lady Pomfret was not likely to retire from the world after this successful alliance; on the contrary, it seemed rather to have stimulated her to fresh efforts, not only for her children, but for the

advancement of herself and my Earl, and fortune smiled on her efforts. In 1751, Walpole writes:

"My Lord Pomfret is made Ranger of the Parks, and, by consequence, my Lady, Queen of Ducks Island, a spot near Birdcage Walk, where Charles II. kept his decoy of ducks."

It is curious to observe that Walpole's vindictiveness pursues the Countess even yet, though his interest in her movements, or his spite towards her, may fairly be supposed to have ended in the melancholy fate of Lady Granville; but time seems only to have sharpened the edge of his tongue, and his eye is keen as ever tracking the movements of the Countess, her brood and her belongings.

In May of this same year he records another achievement:

"The learned Italian Countess is disposing of her fourth daughter, the fair Lady Julianna. to Penn, the wealthy sovereign of Pennsylvania."

Following is a bit of gossip about Lord Granville, referring to a projected marriage which

never took place; but everything of this kind is capital for Walpole:

"I hear my Lord Granville has cut another colt's tooth, and is going to be married to Lady Julianna Collier, a very pretty girl, daughter of Lord Portmore. There are not above two and forty years difference in their age, and not above three bottles a day in their drinking. She will not make as good a queen as our old friend Sophia, but will like better, I suppose, to make a widow."

Then:—"This marriage did not take place; his flames are cool in that quarter as well as others."

In the July following of the same year '53, another catastrophe visited the Countess, the death of her husband—a loss, which she no doubt bore with that fortitude which had carried her through so many others. However, in death or sorrow Walpole's sneer remains bitter as ever. He cannot afford her a charitable paragraph; his style glitters with a metallic malignancy as he pursues his victim to the death. He comments thus on the bereavement:

"Lord Pomfret is dead, not a thousand pounds in debt. The Countess has two thousand a year rent-charge for jointure, five hundred as Lady of the Bedchamber to the late Queen, and fourteen thousand in money in her own power. What a fund for follies! The new earl has about £2400 a year at present, but deep debts and post obits. He has not put on mourning, but in the middle of this very hot summer has produced himself in a suit of crimson velvet, that he may be sure of not being mistaken for being in weepers. There are rents worth £10,000 left to his granddaughter, little Sophia Carteret, and the whole personal estate between the two unmarried daughters, Lady Louisa and Lady Anne. So the seat must be stripped. There are a few fine small pictures, and one very curious one of the marriage of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York. The statues, which are part of the Arundel collection, are famous, but few good. The Cicero is fine, and celebrated; the Marius I think still finer; the rest are Scipios, &c., and the Lord knows who, which

have lost more of their little value by living out of doors; and there is a green-house full of colossal fragments."

This is our last glimpse of Lord Lempster—swaggering in a crimson suit, in order to show contempt for his father's memory for having left a fortune to his mother. What a delicious morsel! Walpole had previously informed us that Lempster had killed an officer in a duel about a play debt, and *was in the wrong*. He speaks of him with compassionate contempt as "poor Lord Lempster," and afterwards, on his accession to the earldom, announces that, "Her (Lady Pomfret's) son, the present Earl, is ruined, but has grown a speaker in the House of Lords, and makes comparison between Julius Cæsar and the watchman of Bristol, in the same style as he compared himself to Cerberus, who, when he had one head cut off, three more came in its place."

And so Walpole parades the whole family of Fermor before us one by one; but before closing this chapter of domestic history makes a last sketch—one farewell view of the Countess in her

old character revived—as a literary and artistic personage.

At the sale at Easton Neston, she bought the collection of statues, for the purpose of presenting them to the University of Oxford, and Walpole notes the circumstance.

"Lady Pomfret gave her husband's statues to Oxford University. She ordered in her will that she should be buried at Oxford. I dare say she had treasured up some idea of the Countess Matilda, who gave St. Peter his patrimony. How your ghost and mine will laugh at hers when posterity begins to consecrate her learning!

"If you are at Rome when you receive this, pray make my lady P.'s compliments to the statues of the Capitol, and tell them that she has purchased, &c."

Follows the presentation scene itself, drawn in the same lively and characteristic manner:

"Our old diversion the Countess has exhibited herself lately to the public exactly in the style you would guess. Having given her Lord's

statues to the University, she has been there at the public act to receive adoration.

"A box was built for her near the vice-chancellor, where she sat for three days together, for some hours at a time, to hear vows and speeches and hear herself called Minerva. The public orator had prepared an eulogium on her beauty, but being struck with her appearance, he had presence of mind to whisk his compliments to the beauties of her mind. Do but figure the scene. Her dress had all the tawdry poverty and frippery with which you remember her, and I dare swear her tympany, scarce covered with ticking, produced itself through the slit of her scoured damask robe. It is amazing that she did not mash her few words of Latin as she used to fricassee the French and Italian, or that she did not torture some learned simile, like her comparing the tour of Sicily to squaring the circle, or as when she said it is as difficult to get into an Italian coach as for Cæsar to take Attica—she meant Utica."

And so, with Walpole, we dismiss the subject.

Notwithstanding her many absurdities Lady Pomfret was, on the whole, victorious in her contest with the world. She succeeded in life, and therefore merits the tribute of our admiration—for what else do we admire but success? She secured brilliant matches for all her daughters, which is all that need be to secure the salvation of any fashionable mother, or win the approval of posterity. Lady Henrietta, the plainest of the family, like her handsome sisters, married a widower also, she became the second wife of Mr. Conyers, of Copt House, Surrey; Louisa married the first Lord Cremorne, and Julianna, as we have said, William Penn, at the time a great match, and in the full enjoyment of those vast estates which the American Revolution swept away from him afterwards.

LONDON
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
LIMITED STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

00024272

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018